

UNDEFEATED
BATHAMUT
CHRONICLE

最弱無敗の 神装機龍

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明月千里

ILL. 春日歩 AYUMU KASUGA

Saijaku Muhai no Bahamut

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最弱無敗の
神装機竜

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Prologue – Bud of Rebellion

(I, didn't receive help from anyone.....)

—

(No one—came searching for me.....)

—

(Those two, betrayed me.....)

—

Within the morning glow of the sun that hadn't fully risen, the medium sized Blade of polished Mythrildyte cut through the air.

The dilapidated underground room of the abandoned building was the ideal hideout in this capital city, it was possible to train there even while in the middle of an infiltration mission.

Although, it didn't mean that the radar of a special equipment type Drake wouldn't detect this activity, so they couldn't completely let their guard down.

But, they basically concentrated and carried out their daily routine.

"Fu, haa-.....!"

Their hand instantly touched the Sword Device on their waist, and right after that they pulled the trigger of the Drag-Ride's right armored arm and executed body control operation and mind control operation simultaneously.

The perfect harmonization of two types of control operation.

Precision and concentration where not even an instant of deviation was allowed were indispensable.

A speed that the eye couldn't even follow, that wasn't the case here.

For their current self, they were able to produce a speed on a level that could only be confirmed after the slash had happened roughly about one in ten times.

Even so it was a drastic improvement.

Until half a year ago their success rate was only once in a hundred times.

One year ago it wasn't even a surety that they were able to do it once in a thousand times.

"Tsu.....! Fuu.....!"

The inside of their pilot suit became sticky with sweat after finishing their five hundredth's practice swinging.

Exhaustion flooded their body the instant they stopped and they staggered. They leaned on the dirty wall of the dilapidated building.

They felt dizziness like anemia and their consciousness felt distant.

"Fu, fufufufufufu....."

It was still far from being complete.

They knew that the difficulty would further rise sharply in real battle.

But, they were definitely getting near.

That pleasant realization filled the body of that person.

"—To be able to do this one hundred times out of one hundred, the Black Hero is really terrifying."

They brushed up their front hair that was sticking on their face due to their sweat while muttering with a voice that was filled with respect and longing.

"Most likely that person is far older than me, he—or perhaps she, still feels very far out of my reach."

The legendary Drag-Knight that they had never seen.

They felt like they were touching a portion of that person by learning his technique and felt exaltation from it.

They took off their pilot suit, wrung out a wet towel, and wiped their sweat inside the underground space.

Bit by bit.

(It's bit by bit but, I too am getting close to becoming the same monster—surely.)

That felt extremely enjoyable, and delightful.

For this person who spent half their life in despair, there was no greater purpose in life than this.

That didn't change even in this world changing situation.

Above all else, there was the prospect that at last they might be able to finally meet with the legendary Black Hero—the existence that they idolized who they didn't even know whether that person was a man or woman.

(I'll be able to meet, that person who saved me.)

Just from thinking that, an exaltation that was incomparable from when they felt the result of their training was making this person's chest throb hard.

"—"

At that timing, sound suddenly came from outside the building and this person took a vigilant stance.

"Alma-sama. Are you there?"

"—What do you want? Say the code first."

"Yes! Pardon my rudeness!"

Alma wore their pilot suit while the young man who came to contact them muttered the decided code.

The code was the password that was used by fellow members of a certain company.

[Kilzrake Family]

It was a group that controlled a gigantic market next after Magialca Zen Vanfrick's firm that boasted the greatest influence in the Marcafal Kingdom. It introduced itself as a company at the surface, but it was practically something like a mafia.

Armed might that included Drag-Knights, human trafficking, drugs, prostitution, etc, it's a group that handled illegal commodities and services on a large scale.

Its name wasn't really known in the New Kingdom, but in the neighboring

country it was treated with caution as a threat.

It was managed by a boss whose identity was unknown. This girl named Alma was a subordinate who was a trusted confidant of that boss.

She was called with the codename Alma Kilzrake. She was an elite Drag-Knight.

She had skill that allowed her to pilot an EX Drake at her age that was only 14. Her characteristic was her fierce fighting style that was greedily pursuing victory, but her birth and true identity wasn't known by anyone except by the boss.

Wearing a hat with wide brim, her well-ordered features and her blonde hair that was tied into a short ponytail gave her a look like a boy who still had the traces of youthfulness.

The arriving messenger informed that Alma.

"Actually, there is a message from boss—. He asked you to contact him at last. That silver haired chore prince, no, he is called as the hero of the New Kingdom now as the one with great contributions to the victory in Avalon."

"I see, so the time to move him finally came."

Alma who heard that made a fearless smile on her lips.

watashi ore

(Ino, I know that this world is false.)

In her childhood, she received Baptism from an unknown person.

And then, the existence that was her [boss] told her the fact that these three days of parade had been repeated three times.

She knew about the existence of the queen who schemed to bury the sin of her past by tricking the people and about the princess who didn't know anything.

How she was completely forgotten and abandoned by the two.

(Finally, the time to accomplish my revenge has come!)

Alma possessed a certain deep fate that was related to the present New Kingdom.

"Fu, fufufufu....."

After the messenger left, a laugh leaked out from the corners of her lips.

Thus that person started to move.

As a ghost seeking to settle her unfortunate fate.

Chapter 1 – Pitch Black And Silence, And

Part 1

"I told you, how about I listen to your talk again? Lux, did you hear?"

"You are—"

Seven years ago. Inside the grounds of the Arcadia Empire's castle.

—

Beside the fountain in the castle's courtyard that was decorated with brightly colored plants, a man was calling out to Lux.

At that time Lux was facing a predicament.

Lux's grandfather was blamed because of his remonstrance to the emperor. He was thrown into jail and then executed. After that Lux's mother died from a horse cart accident. Lux who fell into despair was saved by Philuffy.

After that, Lux attempted to change the old empire using a proper method.

He polished his skill as a Drag-Knight, an occupation that was becoming the core of this era. Even though he didn't have any authority as an imperial prince, he planned to obtain another accomplishment so that he would be recognized.

He would become recognized by the emperor, increase the number of his allies and obtain the right to speak, and then gradually change the despotic administration and the trend of chauvinism from the inside.

He swore to create a country where his important little sister and childhood friend could live in peace.

—But, in reality, even getting the permission to use a Drag-Ride was very hard for Lux.

Others didn't want Lux who was the youngest son that was very far from inheriting the throne to be holding a weapon or anything.

He was told like that by the people of the castle. He was unable to even touch

a Sword Device until Fugil obtained permission for him.

Even after that another hell was starting for him.

Although his aptitude in using a Drag-Ride was high, his body was still childish and immature. Everyday he whipped his immature body to the limit and worked hard until he lost consciousness every time.

That desperate effort was coupled with Lux's prodigious talent. He obtained strength as a Drag-Ride and produced achievements in Abyss extermination, but he wasn't recognized at all.

He was made to realize his naivety that the opinion on him would change by doing such things.

Even after obtaining strength through a probability that was nearly a miracle, people whose thoughts of him was the same like before—no, who thought even worse of him, appeared inside the castle and they tried to remove him.

Someone who agreed with Lux's ideal of helping the people didn't exist at all in this castle.

—

With only a single exception, this eldest brother of his.

"Why is Nii-san listening to my opinion?"

Lux asked back while his expression was staying calm.

The eldest son of the Arcadia Empire's emperor, Fugil.

The former Drag-Knight who was said to have withdrawn from battle due to a wound that he got from a war.

He made appearance in public due to his status as a member of the imperial family, but he was taciturn and almost didn't get involved with other people. An eccentric man.

While he possessed a position that could make use of overwhelming authority, he didn't indulge himself in debauchery and also maintained distance from politics.

The first impression from Lux who was the youngest brother from a different

mother was like that.

Lux was puzzled why he caught Fugil's eyes and why he was helping him.

"—This garden is old. Its appearance look well tended, but it's a mess due to repeated unnecessary transplantation."

Fugil turned his gaze towards the garden and spoke words that doubled as his reply to Lux.

"If the soil is bad, the plant will also get sick. The world of man is the same. Therefore to tend to a country too, there is no other way than severing all the roots that had grown too long and entangled with each other, and then change the plants and also the soil. That period is approaching near."

"....."

That was an invitation.

It was an offer to Lux to change this world— this country from its foundation together.

For Lux whose proposals and advice were completely rejected by the all the people inside the castle, this was the only remaining hope for him.

Airi

Philuffy

His little sister and childhood friend.

A hand of salvation was reaching out to him in order to protect his remaining beloved people.

He once got the chance to practice piloting a Drag-Ride and obtained strength by piling up an absurd amount of effort.

".....Can you, please, wait for a little bit more?"

Lux gave a vague reply while knowing his eldest brother's intentions.

He understood.

In order to change everything from its foundation, the plants needed to be uprooted from the ground.

There would be no chance for the rulers and the people conspiring with them to return.

"I don't mind. But, there is a time limit to everything. Time that has passed won't return back for the second time. Just like how you lost your grandfather and mother."

"Please let me think for three more days. I want to think carefully one more time, about the way to persuade father and the others—"

Inside his heart, Lux had decided how he would choose.

Even so, he needed time.

The time to resolve himself to take away something from someone else.

"That's fine, I will wait as long as you like."

In respond the man who saved Lux out from the depths of despair responded with a gentle smile.

"I've been waiting all this time. For a person who can be called hero—the appearance of the person in possession of that will, that is exactly"

"Fugil, niisan....."

Three days later, Lux started to move.

And then, the plan of revolution started.

Part 2

"Is, that.....! Sacred Eclipse—?"

New Kingdom Atismata, the capital Roadgalia.

Near the castle gate that was enveloped by the hustle and bustle of the parade's first day, Lux looked up the parapet that surrounded the castle.

The one standing while clad with an ominous miasma, was the person shaped Ragnarok with the outside appearance of a girl clad in a pure white dress—Sacred Eclipse.

On the jutting out terrace, a tall and lean man with glint in his eye like a beast—Fugil Arcadia was standing.

—Inconsistency.

After the mortal combat at the abandoned capital Guernica in the Marcafal Kingdom, Aeryl succeeded in taking control of Avalon.

And then she connected to the system and turned off the activation of Sacred Eclipse.

The remaining Lords and Fugil were defeated by the Seven Dragon Paladins and died.

The reality should be like that.

But, Lux's consciousness told him that wasn't the case.

The two threats existing before his eyes weren't a dream or an illusion, they were the real thing.

The memory of Lux and the others had been falsified by Avalon and Fugil—

At the very least, Magialca, Singlen, and Aeryl weren't in this royal capital.

The Seven Dragon Paladins were defeated in the battle against Fugil and the reorganization of the world was carried out.

Two weeks passed after that and the three days of parade in this royal capital was repeated.

Strictly speaking, time itself wasn't being repeated.

The memory of these three days—the consciousness of all the people existing in this country were getting rewound to the first day of the parade after every three days.

A manipulation of consciousness on a world scale.

The people were being led astray by being made unable to notice only the inconsistency and specific phenomenon.

That was the truth that Lux realized.

Transforming Drag-Ride

The Divine Raiment of Artifact Ouroboros, Endless. That was the true identity of what created this world revision.

(Then, the Sacred Eclipse hasn't stopped? If the countdown to the world's destruction is continuing, how many days are remaining!?)

Lux shuddered. When he looked up to the castle, he met the gaze of Fugil who was standing on the terrace.

Fugil's gaze was sharp as though it pierced through the opponent.

In response, Lux too also hardened his spirit so as to not lose against that.

Within the tension that was just a hair away from exploding, that balance suddenly crumbled.

"—Fu"

Fugil turned around without showing any particular action and walked away into the castle.

(.....-!? He doesn't realize that I noticed what is going on? No, is he ignoring me.....? But, the Sacred Eclipse is still—)

Lux's expression changed into bewilderment. Then he talked to the guard that was stationed near the castle gate.

".....? Is something the matter, Lux-dono?"

"The parade has just ended and her majesty the queen is in the middle of resting. We are told to not let anyone pass inside anymore for today, is it an

urgent business?"

The Sacred Eclipse that was standing on the parapet suddenly vanished when he looked away.

"....."

Even if he tried to pursue, there was no trace remaining behind.

And then, it seemed it was only Lux alone who noticed its existence in this place.

—'The consciousness of everyone, of all the people who are in this country right now is being captured by the deception that the world is in peace.'

The fictive world created by the resonance of Avalon and Ouroboros.

Lux felt horrified by that reality once more and he became pale.

"No..... It's, nothing."

Currently it looked like Sacred Eclipse wasn't rampaging yet.

In that case there was still some leeway.

Rather than challenging it into battle at this place and provoking it, Lux judged that he ought to judge the situation first.

Either way, Sacred Eclipse would revive endlessly without connecting to Avalon's system and turning it off.

Thinking so, Lux turned back towards the path he came from and returned back to the inn where everyone of the Academy was staying.

Lux's work for this first day of parade was already over.

His remaining schedule was only to rest in the inn until evening and then make merry with everyone of the Academy in the bar, but—

(Wait? More importantly, what does this mean!?)

The clash of the Seven Dragon Paladins and Fugil.

In the battle that happened more than two weeks ago, Fugil made an allusion regarding the raison d'être of Sacred Eclipse.

Its objective was the salvation of the weak.

Furthermore it would lend its strength to the core of the resistance movement that could possibly change the one-sided government system.

"....."

Uneasiness spread inside Lux's chest like dirty mud.

With Sacred Eclipse in the castle, did that mean that its possession target was in there?

In any case, the nobles colluding with the Old Empire faction that was trying to overturn the New Kingdom, Waybra and Sieg Kreutzer were deliberately murdered.

The mastermind of this repeating parade and the objective was—

First, he had to determine those.

Currently, if it was impossible to learn that truth other than Lux, he had to ask for the cooperation of Lisha and the others and solve it—

(.....However, who is doing this? Just who in the world is Fugil and Sacred Eclipse cooperating with? Just what kind of information did Waybra and Sieg know that it got them killed?)

—

[Do you really think that her majesty the queen right now has the caliber that is worthy to bring the New Kingdom together? Do you think that she can be entrusted with the future from here on? If I say that I'm endorsing someone else—]

—

"-.....!?"

Suddenly the words that he heard from Celis's father, Dist, right before the loop of this period of parade began flashed at the back of his mind.

Dist conveyed those words to Lux in order to strengthen the foundation of the New Kingdom that was shaken by the incidents that happened in succession. The senior consuls who supported the thinking of the Old Empire—the Old Empire faction wasn't the only faction that existed out there.

Dist who was one of the Four Great Nobles certainly said something like that, about endorsing someone else to replace the queen as the new king.

At the conversation that time, the talk finished with Dist concluding that he would keep supporting the queen as usual, but in the end the identity of the [someone who would replace the queen] was still buried in the dark.

Thinking of the miniscule chance of the information getting leaked or their relationship from thereon, Lux intentionally didn't ask Dist about it at that time, but he could roughly imagine the answer.

Prime Minister Nulph was originally in the Atismata faction.

There was no other candidate other than him who was supporting Queen Raffi as her close aide.

If he moved in order to kill Waybra and Sieg Kreutzer who attempted to shake the structure of the New Kingdom using some kind of information—

(No..... it's still too hasty to decide that it's Prime Minister Nulph.)

In any case, if he was going to solve this incident, there was a need to know everything.

What was the secret grasped by the core personage of the Old Empire faction that could shake the foundation of the New Kingdom?

Who was it who feared that secret coming to light and instructed the Automatons to carry out the assassination in order to seal the truth?

The person who conducted that act, if for example it was the person from the New Kingdom faction just like he imagined, in that case Lux would have to throw himself into a battle of no return.

It wouldn't affect Lux alone, it might bring harm to his little sister Airi and his comrades in the Academy too.

This was a completely different situation compared to before when it would be fine to just defeat the enemy.

"What in the world is this, it's like—"

Lux felt that he was at his wits' end and he unconsciously leaked out a sigh.

The incident whirling under the surface.

Tension that even made it hard for him to breathe caused him to remember the time five years ago in the era of the Old Empire.

".....This is, like the era of the Old Empire?"

The wild delusion that surfaced at the back of his mind made him leak out a bitter smile.

—'Impossible.'

The country had changed from that time.

The time when he had to be mindful of the expression of the aristocrats, of the time when he had to stifle his heart and be mindful of other people's mood was over.

A world unlike that should have been created.

That was.....how it should be.

If not, the sacrifice of the imperial family and their retainers five years ago would be—

"—You should look to the front properly when you are walking you know? If not, you will stumble even when it's at a place where there is nothing."

"Ah....."

Tap, Lux returned to his senses when someone lightly poked his shoulder.

Looking there, there was the nostalgic figure of a girl in the middle of the main street that was jumbled with a lot of people.

"Long time no see, Lux-kun. Are you well?"

The one who directed an expression filled with affection to him was Krulcifer in her uniform.

At the first and second loop of the parade, he was reunited with her along with Mel and Pope Nias of the Ymir Theocracy in the castle. He never thought that he would meet her here.

"Krulcifer-san!? Why—?"

Thus Lux was shocked and asked her, but Krulcifer smiled wryly and placed her hand on his lips.

She chuckled and turned her gaze towards a food stand at the main street.

"I was asked to babysit those girls. They said that they are curious of the food of the stalls and won't listen."

Lux followed her gaze and found Soffice who was stuffing her cheeks with skewered meat and Mel who was holding a cheese cake wrapped in paper.

It seemed that the two of them were enjoying the parade first before the formal visitation.

But, perhaps they clearly heard Lux and Krulcifer's exchange even within the noisy street. Mel walked towards them quickly with an exasperated expression.

"Can you please not talk as you please? It was you who forcefully asked for outing permission because you said that you want to watch Onii-chan's hour of triumph right!?"

"Is there something like that? My memory is a bit blurry."

When Krulcifer played dumb like that, Soffice too immediately flared up at her.

"I'm not that much of a glutton. Correct that in front of Lux."

Lux's cheeks unconsciously loosened up seeing Soffice's figure that was lacking in persuasiveness due to her holding skewered meat in one hand while saying that.

The Seven Dragon Paladin of the Ymir Theocracy who had a petite stature and platinum colored hair, Mel Gizalut.

The representative of the Turkimes Confederation who had dark brown skin and black hair, while wearing the characteristic outfit of a foreign country—Seven Dragon Paladin Soffice Xfer.

The two of them existed here even in this situation where Lux had recovered his normal consciousness.

In other words, at the very least the two of them were alive.

"Both of you, I'm glad! You two are safe!"

The instant he saw them, intense happiness welled up inside his chest and he reflexively took the hand of the two of them and hugged them.

Unlike Aeryl, Singlen and Magialca who he saw in the middle of the parade as illusions created by Avalon's perception manipulation, these two had definite presence which made him feel relieved.

"Wai-, Onii-chan. People are looking you know? I'm happy though."

"This lad is bold, unlike his appearance."

When Lux held the waists of the two girl with both hands and hugged them, Mel and Soffice who didn't know the situation were surprised while their faces reddened.

(As I thought, it looks like Mel and Soffice are still under the effect of the perception manipulation.....)

What did it take for someone to notice?

Lux was also curious about that, but suddenly he noticed a mute dangerous presence rising up behind him.

He gasped and turned around. When he saw Krulcifer there, she turned her gaze aside for some reason and looked down with a complicated expression.

"Haa..... The Lux-kun that I know is already nowhere to find. He shouldn't be a person who can calmly embrace a girl who isn't even his lover even if it's a reunion with a friend that he hasn't met for a long time."

Krulcifer unusually made an expression of displeasure. She was sending a cold gaze to Lux.

Lux let go of the two in panic and swung around his hands as though crossing them in front of him with a flustered look.

"Kru, Krulcifer-san, you are misunderstanding!? That's, it's, there isn't any particular deep meaning in that hug, it's—"

"I didn't notice the lad's hidden feeling..... To think that his positivity level to me is far higher than Krulcifer, this is honestly troubling. It's okay if it's only as

far as a kiss."

"Krulcifer, defeat isn't something to feel shame about. After all it's simply that the enemy is too strong."

Soffice showed a bewildered gesture while her expression was staying blank. Mel intentionally made fun of Krulcifer.

Lux got flustered even more by the dialogue of the two who were related with the Ymir Theocracy and the Key's Supervisor.

"It looks like I was mistaken. Lux-kun was making a very grave face, that was why I carelessly called out to you but, it seems you actually have a lot of leeway."

Krulcifer turned around while sighing deeply. She was turning her back on Lux.

Without pause she was heading into the congestion of the parade.

"Wai-, it's a complete misunderstanding Krulcifer-san! Or rather, both of you please stop adding fuel to the fire!?"

"Haa..... It can't be helped. How about we go off by ourselves? We made that kind of promise anyway."

"It's boring but, that's the promise. Let's meet again tomorrow, Lux."

Mel and Soffice seemed to guess the situation and let him go for now.

Lux chased after Krulcifer in panic and after giving an explanation desperately, they went to take a break at the central park.

Part 3

"Here. Krulcifer-san! I bought a snack for you!"

After soothing down his female classmate somehow, Lux bought crepe at a stall and handed it to her.

But, although Krulcifer accepted it, her gaze was chilly.

"Lux-kun. I'm different from the princess and your childhood friend. It will be a big mistake if you think you can deceive me with something like a crepe."

"Sorry....."

Lux's shoulders dropped in dejection and he stood stock still.

Then, Krulcifer finally let out a long sigh 'fuu' and her expression returned to normal.

"Haa..... I was shocked when I saw your brooding expression at the start, but it seems it's the usual Lux-kun. I'm relieved."

"....."

She said that with her usual cool attitude and tone while showing a small smile.

It seemed she wanted to say that the exchange before this was her tricking Lux in order to observe his actual state, but—

(It feels like she was seriously getting absurdly angry. It wasn't an act.....!)

Lux had the self-awareness that he was ignorant of a woman's heart, but as expected he was able to at least understand that really well.

"And, what happened? I'll be happy if it's something that you can also tell me."

"That is—"

Lux was conflicted when Krulcifer peered into his eyes.

He wondered whether it was fine to tell her about the terrifying truth that he noticed.

Most likely other than Lux, there was no one who remembered about what happened in Avalon at that time.

He also didn't know whether she would be able to remember even if he dared to tell her.

However, Lux himself was also unable to fully grasp what was going on.

In the abandoned capital of Guernica in the Marcafal Kingdom, the Seven Dragon Paladins were defeated by Fugil in the battle for Avalon and the [world's revision] thing was carried out.

After that, more than two weeks passed in reality and a parade was held in the royal capital.

Someone who controlled Avalon, or perhaps Fugil who allied himself with that person rewound this three day parade at the very least two times already, and made the parade restart from the first day.

The reset only rewound the memory of the people back to the parade's first day, while the time was properly passing in reality.

Also, the inconsistency that resulted in that occasion wasn't noticed by anyone because of the perception manipulation.

And then each time the loop happened, people who seemed to belong to the hostile force that was opposing the New Kingdom were removed without anyone knowing.

On the last day of the first loop, the man called Waybra who belonged to the Old Empire faction and held the secret of the New Kingdom was killed.

In the second loop, one of the Four Great Nobles, Sieg Kreutzer who colluded with Waybra was similarly murdered.

In other words it could be inferred that the user of Avalon was someone on the side of the New Kingdom.

And then, there was a possibility that someone was being possessed by the human type Ragnarok, Sacred Eclipse.

Sacred Eclipse was the greatest and strongest Ragnarok that was said to would destroy the world. Even if it was defeated, with the passing of time it

would revive. To stop it could only be done by controlling Avalon.

(—Looking back after I put the situation in order like this, it's full of things that I don't know.)

He only knew one thing, that Fugil was lending his hand to this situation.

He only grasped that he didn't know how long this loop would continue.

If he didn't expose the true identity of the person managing the loop, it was possible that someone else would become sacrificed again.

It seemed to be able to smash through the binding of the perception manipulation, it could only be done by someone who was receiving Baptism or Elixir, or someone who felt strong discomfort at the fictive world.

—

Thus, it was doubtful whether Krulcifer would be able to understand if he told her about the situation.

"—It looks like, you cannot say it."

Krulcifer made a small smile seeing Lux who was falling silent.

In the end, Lux was unable to say it.

If he carelessly asked for assistance while still not understanding anything, she who was originally an exchange student from a foreign country would get dragged into the trouble of the New Kingdom and got hurt.

Just like how Airi got involved in the revolution five years ago.

"Sorry. Right now I'm still confused. What should I do, how should I say it. But, I'm—"

He couldn't express it well in words.

Krulcifer had made peace with the Einfeld family and grasped happiness. He didn't know whether he should tell her.

He thought that he shouldn't involve her, at least until the true identity of the enemy became clear.

"Is that so? In that case, from now I will look out for you."

Then Krulcifer brushed up her beautiful blue long hair and quietly brought her face closer to Lux.

Lux's chest beat fast toward that mature and mischievous smile.

"Eh.....?"

"If for example Lux-kun is in my position, you won't be able to leave me alone when I'm making that kind of face. Even if there is nothing that can be done, you'll still try to become my strength. I have no doubt of that."

"....."

Lux was unable to reply immediately hearing that.

Even though he was trying to put some distance from her so as to not involve her, his escape path was immediately taken away.

Krulcifer didn't know anything about the revised world.

Even so, she said that she would become Lux's strength.

Then, there wasn't any need anymore to hesitate taking the hand that was offered to him.

"Thank you..... I still cannot say anything clear, but there is something that I want to investigate, regarding the truth that is happening behind the scenes of this parade."

"Then, let's go to a quiet place with just the two of us. If there is a need to hide your action, it's best to spend an ordinary day naturally."

Krulcifer said that in delight and pulled on Lux's hand while her other hand was holding her crepe.

Lux also accepted that proposal that was really like her and headed to a certain district.

Part 4

—Three hours later.

He walked around the city that was in a festive mood due to the parade along with Krulcifer, then they rested under a tree's shadow in the central park under the name of taking a break.

Incidentally, the place was under the big tree where he heard Celis's confession in the first loop.

"Fuu, I'm more tired than expected, doing this investigation while pretending as lovers."

"This is the first time I heard about that setting though....."

Lux smiled wryly at Krulcifer's very forceful attitude and sat down beside her.

They tried clothes in a dressmaker shop and each of them purchased casual clothes for themselves.

They bought clothes for spring which was a bit too early at this period of time.

Then they participated as a pair in a quiz tournament that was held in the downtown. It was fun when they obtained second place.

However, what bothered Lux more than that was—

"Come to think of it, the last path that we took, it was the path that I walked together with Krulcifer-san in the past wasn't it?"

"Yes, it's great that you noticed. That was the course of my first date with Lux-kun."

Krulcifer chuckled and said that with a smile.

When he heard her delighted voice, somehow he too also felt ticklish.

Honestly speaking, he almost forgot their front of doing investigation.

He was nervous when he went out alone with her for the first time, but right now his heart was beating fast while at the same time he was feeling a mysterious feeling of relief.

Normally Krulcifer was thought as cool and flawless by the students around her, but she was unexpectedly playful. She also had a childish aspect that liked to joke and find fault.

No, Lux thought that was her natural state instead.

She was used to wearing a mask since her childhood and feigned to be someone flawless. But her showing him her affable attitude like this was surely the proof of how much she was letting down her guard towards him.

He was immersed in his time with her so much that he almost completely forgot about the pressing situation he was placed in right now.

"After this Lux-kun will return to the inn and participate in the Academy's banquet right? We should confirm the result before that. Alterize."

Krulcifer suddenly dropped her voice's tone and turned her gaze behind the large tree she was leaning on.

Then, a female with an intellectual look wearing a black butler outfit slowly showed herself in front of Lux and Krulcifer.

A Drag-Knight of the Ymir Theocracy who served as a butler to the Einfeld family, Alterize McClair.

Normally she was assigned the role of ascertaining the romantic relationship of Lux and Krulcifer, but this time alone she seemed slightly different.

Since around three hours ago she was carrying out the request to observe the surrounding of Lux and Krulcifer who at the surface were innocently having fun in the parade.

She was asked to watch the surroundings, whether there was anyone who was watching Lux and Krulcifer's action.

"There wasn't anyone that looked suspicious in the surroundings, so I found myself hoping to get called to report briefly. It was a bit unfortunate that I was unable to confirm the progress between Ojou-sama and Lux-sama."

"No that's..... Forget about that, Alterize-san, did you find anything?"

When Lux asked with a complicated expression, Alterize straightened her back.

The tone of her voice dropped by a level and she formed her words quietly.

"Speaking from the conclusion, it's just as Lux-sama predicted. I believe that it was the military officer of the New Kingdom who was observing you and Ojou-sama."

"....."

He half expected that, but that report still made Lux look grave.

Perhaps previously he was also being observed during the parade?

He thought that because he noticed the pattern that the people in this looping parade fundamentally were trying to trace back the same action every time.

In the first and second loops, Yoruka detected a suspicious figure approaching Lux's position.

That figure only approached toward Lux, and after that they headed toward the castle. In the end he didn't find the figure's true identity, but with this it was confirmed.

However, he didn't understand why the person immediately left even though they were watching him.

Lux thought that most likely the person sending the watcher didn't know Lux's circumstance well.

If they knew about Yoruka, they would be on guard against her excellent senses and they wouldn't approach too near.

(Were they ordered that in the case it's confirmed that Yoruka was at my side, they were to quickly abort the investigation and return?)

It wasn't outside the realm of his conjecture. Surely it was generally like that.

That conjecture was completely right on the mark. Conversely Alterize who was someone from the Ymir Theocracy could move under the radar.

"Yes, perhaps..... It was a face that I once saw when I headed to the abandoned capital of Guernica for the decisive battle against the Lords. I believe it was the aide of Prime Minister Nulph."

"——"

Lux frowned hearing Alterize's words that were laced with tension.

In a sense it was an answer that was just as he expected.

But, it was a fact that he didn't wish to be right.

If Prime Minister Nulph obtained Fugil's cooperation and he was removing the New Kingdom's enemies, then it was an alarming situation.

(However, what's this? Despite this, something bothers me. The person who came in the first loop, and the one in the second loop, are they really the same person?)

A strange discomfort grew inside Lux.

But, he didn't happen to have enough information that allowed him to express it in words well.

"Prime Minister Nulph? I wonder what is his intention?"

"As expected, to investigate until that far is..... But, if I'm allowed to say my personal opinion, I cannot see any movement to harm Lux-sama or obtaining some kind of information from him. It was a really passive monitoring."

"....."

On the surface Lux was spending time with Krulcifer for three hours enjoying the parade. And yet their watcher didn't particularly try anything.

What that fact showed was—

"Rather than spying, perhaps they are just observing? Maybe they wanted to insure Lux-kun's safety, or else—"

"Perhaps, they are trying to ascertain that I didn't notice anything and acting like usual."

Lux himself who was muttering that thought that it was unexpected, but if that was the case then he could understand.

A passive monitoring could only result from that kind of situation.

Lux himself made that conjecture from his experience observing several

imperial family members using a Drag-Ride five years ago at the time of the revolution.

"I see, that might be likely. Then, is Prime Minister Nulph observing whether you are doing anything strange?"

".....I think so. Perhaps he is doing this so that I won't get attacked by anyone. Thank you very much, Alterize-san."

Lux relaxed his tenseness and said his thanks to Alterize.

With that he informed her that this case was closed with this at the surface.

"It's great if there are no problems. Then, please have fun in the parade together with Ojou-sama without any worry."

"Eeh.....!?"

"Then Ojou-sama. Do your best to make Lux-sama fall for you completely just as planned. Pardon me."

"Yes. Thank you for your hard work. I will return back this favor."

Alterize left immediately while Lux's eyes opened wide in surprise.

Lux and Krulcifer were left alone under the large tree in the park at evening.

When Alterize's back was gone from view, Lux suddenly asked a question.

"Krulcifer-san. Come to think of it, what did you say to Alterize-san when asking her for this favor?"

When Lux asked for Alterize's cooperation, he did it through Krulcifer. But he didn't ask so far about the detail.

"I didn't say anything significant. I only said to her that it feels like my relationship with Lux-kun is going to advance soon, that's why I want her to leave aside her work from the Ymir Theocracy for now and help out."

"....."

Another misunderstanding was created.

"Say, Krulcifer-san. About our relationship, how is the Einfeld family interpreting it right now? About the matter of engagement, the

misunderstanding has been cleared up completely right?"

"My, do you mean that Lux-kun doesn't like to get engaged with me?"

When Lux asked in panic, Krulcifer played dumb mischievously.

The innocent expression that was showed by the usually cool Krulcifer caused Lux to blush and he averted his gaze away.

"I, it's not that kind of problem. That's, in the first place I'm a criminal and unable to marry so—"

"You're right. But, that collar, I think it will be taken off soon anyway."

"——"

Lux faltered towards that sentence that Krulcifer stated with a serious look.

Certainly his collar would be taken off on the last day, Lisha also said that to him.

But, Lux was unable to hide his surprise that Krulcifer who shouldn't know about that yet this time was guessing it right.

"I don't believe that I said anything that shocking though? I think that it's only natural. You who are a member of the Seven Dragon Paladins and raised a great achievement at the battle this time cannot possibly be treated as a criminal forever. For normal statesmen, this should be something that everyone is thinking about."

".....Perhaps, that's so."

He couldn't say that he had never even imagined it until Lisha told him at the first parade.

"Yes, that's how it is. That's why I want to think about it beforehand. If your collar is taken off and you can get engaged, what will you do? I wonder, do you have someone in your heart already?"

"That's——"

'I see.'

Lux comprehended in his heart.

The reason why Krulcifer who didn't come into contact with him last time was being this proactive.

Perhaps, she was nearby when he exchanged his oath of love with Celis and Yoruka.

If she was waiting for the time when his criminal collar was taken off and awaited for a chance at the previous time and the time before that—

(Such thing, there is no way.....)

"Then, let me at least make a booking right away. When your criminal collar is taken off, if you can come to meet me first....."

He understood clearly now that he had heard the girls' confession.

With what kind of feeling Krulcifer was interacting with him since long ago all this time.

How she was waiting for the wall in Lux's heart to crumble and the time when his criminal collar was taken off—

(Krulcifer-san.....)

At that instant when he confirmed anew his feelings towards this girl who was intimate with him,

"—!?"

He noticed a certain existence and his heart leaped inside his chest.

At the building far at the other side of the park.

He found an Automata girl within the shadow of a house created by the evening sun.

On the head of that figure who was wearing a gown above her pilot suit, there was something like an ant's feeler made from machine growing from her head.

If he remembered correctly, she should be the Automata that Singlen destroyed into pieces at the first Ruin, Babel.

That existence who he didn't even know the name of was watching from afar—

(.....She is looking, not at me? Is her observation target, Krulcifer-san?)

"Lux-kun, what's wrong?"

Krulcifer was worried at Lux who kept silent and looked behind her.

"There is no one though? Was there something?"

"No..... It's nothing."

However, Krulcifer was only tilting her head. She didn't show any sign of noticing the Automata that Lux caught in his sight.

As expected, she was affected by Avalon's perception manipulation and was unable to grasp the existence of the Automata.

He didn't understand what was the objective of the mastermind, but as expected it seemed they intended to do something once more without anyone noticing.

Lux mustn't allow the opponent to notice that Lux had seen through this loop.

Thus, he couldn't say anything here.

With how Krulcifer was unable to see through this false reality, it would be useless even if Lux told her about the truth that he learned.

"Then, let's meet again at the dinner party for the Seven Dragon Paladins tomorrow. Until the last day, I'll think about what I'm going to do after my collar is taken off so—"

".....Yes. See you again tomorrow, Lux-kun."

While Krulcifer noticed Lux was acting somewhat strange, she didn't even try to detain him and finished their talk.

Like that Lux turned around to make it looked like they parted at this place.

"Lux-kun. Just don't forget one thing. No matter what happens, we—I will be your ally."

".....Thank you, Krulcifer-san."

Seeing Krulcifer's smile with the sun behind her, Lux also replied back with a warm smile.

He still didn't understand anything.

He also didn't know what he should tell others.

In such a lonely situation, it felt like he could see a ray of hope.

"....."

Chapter 2 – The Two’s Feelings

Part 1

The evening of the parade’s first day.

Lux was walking alone through the streets of the Royal Capital that was dyed red.

In his schedule, after this a party should be held in bar along with the students of the Academy.

In the first loop, Lux slipped out from the banquet and then he heard Celis’s confession in the public park. He then confessed to her in order to respond to her feelings.

In the second loop he looked around the night stalls alone with Yoruka, where he heard her feelings and they became lovers.

But, in the third loop this time, he was unable to choose either of them.

He had no leeway to respond to their feelings until he determined the truth behind this looping three day period.

(At present, it doesn’t look like I’m being monitored by the Automata..... Was their target Krulcifer-san from the start? For what?)

He was also puzzled about that point, but for the time being he could only make use of the fact that the mark on him was taken off.

In the case that Prime Minister Nulph was behind the loop using Avalon, there was no other way than to obtain proof during this parade and interrogate him.

At the same time, he also had to ascertain what was the aim of Fugil and the Automata Arshalia.

Of course, he had to do it without getting noticed.

Considering that Lux himself was one of the main cast of this parade, it was extremely difficult to realize it into practice.

But, he had no choice but to do that.

At the very least, he couldn't overlook the reality of someone getting killed while nobody was noticing.

It would be great if there was also a comrade who understood the situation like Lux but—

"Yahhoo. Lux-chi, you are really latee. The party is going to start soon y'know?"

Looking there, Tillfur who was in front of the inn's entrance found Lux and waved her hand at him.

Sharis and Noct of the Triad were also standing beside her.

"You are also really full of energy huh, going out like this right after that parade. Or perhaps, are you getting close with some girl again out there?"

"I'm sorry. I met with Krulcifer-san when leaving out for a bit."

"....."

When Lux replied like that casually, Tillfur and Sharis became speechless.

Or rather, their expression also stiffened seriously at the same time.

"Eh? You two, what's wrong?"

"Yes. Lux-san, please don't worry about it. We were resolved but, we were still shocked once more when it's actually really the case. That's all."

Noct placed her hand on Lux's shoulder with a light tap and then sent him her usual unblinking stare.

"Now then, I also have to report to Airi. How Lux-san has finally decided his lover—"

".....Wait, you are wrong there!? I only met Krulcifer-san by accident and then talked with her, that's all!"

Lux finally noticed that they were misunderstanding him and said his denial in panic.

"Is that really true I wonder. Even though Lux-chi was tired at the afternoon

parade, but you went on a date without even going back to the inn first, isn't that suspicious?"

"No, that's because it has been a long time since we met. I'm saying the truth."

Lux shook off Tillfur's suspecting gaze and returned to his room inside the inn for the moment.

He reunited with Airi and Yoruka who was guarding her and they exchanged a light talk.

"Welcome back. It's great that you are safe and sound, Aruji-sama."

".....Haa, so Nii-san left me alone in the inn to go to a date. It's often said that a hero has great fondness for woman, although in Nii-san's cases your fondness is too excessive."

Yoruka greeted him with her usual bright smile, but the first thing that came out from Airi's mouth was caustic words.

The first thing Lux did was confirming that nothing strange had happened, then he was about to head to the bar along with everyone, but—

"....."

"Eh? Phi-chan, what's the matter?"

Lux noticed Philuffy who was remaining in the room until the last while staring outside the window with a dazed look and he called out to her.

Because she was taciturn and expressionless, looking from everyone else's view she would look the same like usual, but as her childhood friend Lux thought that her condition seemed a bit strange.

It wasn't anything like feeling under the weather, but it felt like she was bothered about something—

"Perhaps, I'm feeling a bit tired. When I was walking around outside just now, I saw an illusion."

"Illusion, don't tell me you saw sweets or something?"

Lux joked with a light tone, but Philuffy replied with a serious look.

"Automata. The one we met at the Ark, La Cruche."

"Eh!?"

—*Thump*

Lux's heart leaped greatly and a shudder ran through him.

His mind instantly became blank and he stood stock still for a few seconds.

"Lu-chan, what's wrong?"

Come to think of it, this morning Philuffy said that she couldn't hear the firework sounds.

The sound of fireworks that signaled the opening of the parade.

Even though the power of Avalon's perception manipulation looped the memory of this three day period, used up materials didn't return back to before along with the loop.

It was only the people's memory that was rewound to several days back. They simply didn't notice any inconsistency from it.

In case they were receiving the binding of the perception manipulation, they would be convinced that the sound of fireworks that didn't exist was resounding in the sky.

Even the battle that occurred at the side of the parade wasn't perceived by the passersby.

Looking at it from another perspective, noticing that there was no fireworks and also being able to see the Automata meant—

(I see, the Baptism.....!)

In the past, Philuffy was chosen by Hayes as a guinea pig for human experimentation. There a seed of a Ragnarok was planted into her.

When she entered a state of apparent death because of the shock, Lux fell under the impression that Philuffy had died. He abandoned the revolution plan to go take revenge.

But, in reality right after that Sacred Eclipse poured life force into Philuffy by injecting Elixir into her. Thanks to that she was resurrected a few days later.

Five years ago Fugil and Ouroboros rewound Lux's memory of that time. His memory was falsified, but the fact remained that Philuffy received Baptism at that time.

By receiving Baptism, one's resistance towards Avalon's perception manipulation increased. That was what Singlen told him.

Furthermore the seed of Yggdrasil that was planted inside her heart must be influencing her too.

".....I see. It wasn't, an illusion."

Philuffy muttered after seeing Lux standing stock still like that.

"Phi-chan, about this parade, how far do you know?"

"....."

Lux's vague question made Philuffy ponder for a bit.

Before long she mumbled falteringly as though to confirm her own memory.

"I don't know. But, something is happening.....that's all I know. Also how in that battle, we lost."

Philuffy whispered that and stared outside the window with a faraway look.

It also looked like she was remembering the incident where she was kidnapped and Lux was wailing beside her body.

"Phi-chan. Is your body alright? Do you feel bad anywhere—"

Lux was worried for her health because she was receiving the effect of Baptism, but Philuffy shook her head slightly and smiled.

"I'm fine. That's why don't worry. Talk to me, what is going on."

"—....."

"After all, I am Lu-chan's bodyguard."

Lux lost his words at her consideration to him.

Her words showed her understanding of how Lux knew the reality behind this abnormal situation and how he was planning to act.

Lux hesitated to involve her in this, but Philuffy had seen through even that

hesitation of his.

"Geez, what are you doing there Nii-san? Please come out of the inn quickly."

Lux replied to Airi's voice that came from behind the door that he would come right away, then he briefly made a promise with Philuffy to meet later.

After that, he participated in the dinner party of the parade's first day along with the Academy's students.

Part 2

"My, Philuffy? What's the matter?"

Several hours after the party started in the bar that they reserved, Relie saw Philuffy who was starting to doze off and she raised her voice.

As expected, Lux had gotten the hang of it after already going through the same party two times before.

Lux skillfully handled the Triad and other female students who were trying to make him drink. He did everything he could to avoid drinking while making the others drunk instead.

Lux was responding to their request for a while, it was then he suddenly turned his gaze at the corner of the party. There Philuffy's body was swaying back and forth looking like she was drunk.

".....I don't, feel good. Want to puke."

When Philuffy powerlessly gasped that, Relie quickly stood from her chair and came running.

"You okay Phi!? Someone, call a doctor! Quick!"

"No, I don't think it's that serious....."

Lux was exasperated at the headmaster who suddenly acted energetically even though she herself was severely drunk until now.

She was extremely doting on her little sister as usual.

But in reality, Philuffy wasn't drunk.

Philuffy herself was a type of person who was reasonably strong in drinking. And this time she was also only pretending to drink.

In short it was an act that Lux asked her to do in order to slip out from this party, so it was also within his expectation that Relie would react like this here.

"Relie-san. I'll look after her so please wait here. I'll also wait on her for a while."

"I, is that so? If Lux-kun will look after Phi then it's convenient—no, please take care of her!"

Relie was already letting her true intentions leak out unabashedly. Lux responded with a complicated smile, then he lent his shoulder to Philuffy and they headed outside the reserved bar.

There were no students complaining about that, including Airi and the Triad.

They understood that Relie too would be quiet if Lux was leading Philuffy away.

Lux had also roughly kept everyone company already, so there was no problem even if the main cast of the party was gone.

He asked Yoruka to keep watch at the surroundings of the bar.

In other words, currently his plan was progressing swimmingly without a hitch.

"Phi-chan. I'll keep you company okay?"

".....Right. Thanks."

Just in case, Lux kept lending his shoulder to Philuffy until there was no sign of other people around while moving—but, while walking her voluptuous breast was naturally touching Lux's body. Lux's heart was beating hard inside.

After going to the washroom, they headed towards the main street under the pretense of clearing away the drunkenness.

In the afternoon, the atmosphere was bustling with enthusiasm so he didn't notice, but at night the cold air of January seeped into the skin.

The three day period of this looping parade.

Within the loneliness of being unable to share his memory with everyone else, he was feeling indescribable warmth simply from Philuffy being on his side.

She was like that to Lux since the past.

She was one of his few close friends who knew him since his childhood. He was harboring an emotion of affection for her that was similar to that of family,

and yet, it was also different from his feeling towards his little sister Airi.

For Lux at the period of the Old Empire where he was isolated, she was like a sunny spot, the only place where he could feel at ease.

While walking through the main street where the night stalls were closing shop and passersby were getting sparse, Lux suddenly returned to his senses and questioned Philuffy in a hurry.

"Phi-chan. Since when you noticed about this parade?"

"Just a bit ago..... I didn't remember at the second time. Same like Lu-chan."

It seemed that Philuffy too didn't notice the loop in the first loop where Waybra was killed or the second loop where Sieg Kreutzer was murdered.

But, she felt something was out of place seeing Lux who acted strange sometimes. It seemed she was released from the binding of the perception manipulation with that as the impetus.

"Lu-chan, what will you do?"

"Hm. I have to investigate who and what will they do on the third day of this parade....."

Who was using Avalon and what was their objective for killing other people by generating this loop?

After knowing their objective, he had to stop them no matter what.

"Do you remember about Prime Minister Nulph during the parade? Did he do anything suspicious at the second and third parade? Like is there any strange event or—"

Philuffy shook her head a bit towards Lux's question.

"I saw his face at the party, but there was nothing strange."

"Then, we have to investigate from the people around him huh."

There was no doubt that someone related to the New Kingdom was the cause that was making this loop.

His first suspect was Prime Minister Nulph and the people close to him.

He was mostly staying in the castle, so they would have to sneak into the castle and search for him in order to directly question him.

They would be able to meet him at the second day and the last day's banquet, but there were several things that had to be investigated before that.

The possibility was high that it was Prime Minister Nulph's subordinate who was watching him, but he wouldn't be able to expect any result even if he sneaked into the castle in this situation.

(Wait? In the first place why is this kind of loop occurring? Why is it necessary to repeat it more than once?)

Lux was heading towards the castle with Philuffy while he suddenly got caught in doubt.

Five years ago, in order to guide the future to the Old Empire's destruction, Fugil eliminated the factors that were hindering the revolution.

This loop, was it being done in order to determine the rebellious elements including Waybra that could shake the New Kingdom?

(But, in the revolution five years ago when Fugil used Ouroboros, it was a really pressing situation.)

The first time, Lux fell into despair because of Philuffy's apparent death and he almost abandoned the mission.

The second time was when Airi was taken hostage.

Both loops were carried out in order to avoid fatal risks that could turn the revolution into a failure by rewinding everyone's memories.

In that case this time, the secret recording that Waybra and Sieg possessed was a piece of information that might overturn the New Kingdom—there was no doubt that most likely it was a cause that was worthy of world revision.

Their subordinates should have been murdered by the Automatons at the second loop, but there should be several people who survived.

No.....in this case perhaps it should be said that they were let go.

The possibility was high that the mastermind who caused this world revision

was using this third loop to smoke out the force that was hostile towards the New Kingdom other than Waybra and Sieg.

(Wait? The murdered Waybra and Sieg, how is their situation right now in this loop?)

Lux went to ask someone in order to ascertain that first.

Part 3

"It's unexpected for you to visit this late at night. I will refuse such visitor if it's not you. What happened?"

The place Lux visited was a room in the capital's government building.

It was the room where Celis's father, Dist, who was one of the Four Great Nobles, was staying at. Lux intended to keep his visit here a secret.

He was the one who told Lux about Waybra, Sieg Kreutzer, and also the Old Empire faction just the day before the three day loop started. Currently he was the only clue Lux had to search their whereabouts.

"It doesn't look like this is about my daughter, in that case is this a talk of politics? There will be rumors if you are here for too long. Let's keep this short."

Dist told Lux like that while sitting on the sofa inside the reception room.

He guessed that it wasn't about Celis from seeing Philuffy who came together with Lux.

He didn't think that Lux would talk about his relationship with his daughter while his childhood friend was accompanying him.

Lux sat down on the opposite side with a long table placed between them. Then he asked with a low voice.

"Regarding the case that Lord Dist told about the other day, do you know about what Waybra and Sieg Kreutzer were doing during the parade today?"

"....."

Dist frowned sternly and he fell silent hearing Lux's blunt question.

It was only natural. Because it was a strange question.

He was unable to measure the meaning and intention of Lux's question.

This man in the prime of his life was showing such reaction and expression.

"This isn't something to talk about at this kind of place. The reason why we talked in an underground bar yesterday, I believe if it's you then you will

understand it but—"

The great noble Dist and Lux who was currently a hero of the New Kingdom were talking about the Old Empire faction that was scheming to steal the power from the queen.

Dist alluded about the danger of doing such thing in this government building of the Royal Capital, but Philuffy silently raised her face and muttered.

"It's alright. Currently, there is no one in the surrounding. From the smell and sound, I know."

Similar to Yoruka who was reading the presence of other people, Philuffy also had her physical ability enhanced due to the Ragnarok implanted in her. The sharpness of her five senses couldn't be compared with an average person.

After explaining that to Dist and guaranteeing the security, Lux asked his question once more.

"I apologize for the rudeness. But, this is important. Can you please give me the answer?"

When Lux bowed his head while still sitting Dist sighed slightly and nodded.

He called for a servant and asked her to bring them tea, then he cleared out the people from the surroundings once more.

"Raise your face. It looks like there is a pressing situation. I will cooperate with you depending on the reason why you ask."

"Thank you very much."

Lux lowered his head once more and then he slowly raised his face.

And then, he asked once more regarding the movement of Waybra and Sieg.

Dist himself only knew that Waybra was trying to approach the Old Empire faction, but he didn't know about what he was doing during the parade.

Regarding Sieg Kreutzer, he was doing the same like Dist. He was acting as security of the parade along with his private soldiers. Right now he was resting in another government building.

"....."

It seemed from Dist's point of view that Sieg Kreutzer hadn't died and was still accomplishing his role in the parade's security.

But, in reality, Sieg should have been killed already, so at present the building he was staying at should be empty.

"Then, can you please teach me the location of the building where he is staying?"

However, Sieg had several surviving subordinates.

Lux didn't know whether they were private soldiers that were formally registered or hired mercenaries, but they should be contacting Sieg at the loop this time too.

It was highly probable that at the second loop the Automatons were letting several of Sieg's subordinates to escape so that at the loop this time they could investigate them.

Lux was aiming to follow after them.

".....Are you intending to negotiate with the Old Empire faction? Your current status is really complicated. It's better to not get near them carelessly."

"I understand."

Dist's warning was reasonable, but Lux didn't back down.

"I have no intention of getting involved with them unprepared. But, there is something that I have to ascertain no matter what. A danger is approaching this country, no—this world."

"I see....."

Dist muttered that. Then he sighed while turning toward the table and took out a map. He pointed at a spot in it.

Lux said his thanks before he moved to exit the building. But he was stopped before opening the door.

"Is it alright if you don't ask about the other matter? About the man who was asking for my cooperation—"

That was the talk that Lux heard the day before the parade started.

There was someone trying to replace Queen Raffi as the ruler of the New Kingdom.

Dist said that man was asking for his help, but—

"It's alright. If it's about that person then I already know."

Lux intentionally didn't say it out loud, but he knew that it was Prime Minister Nulph.

But, if it was him who worked together with Fugil using the power of Avalon to create this loop, then he couldn't mention that name even more.

According to Philuffy, it didn't seem like there was the presence of Automata around them even now, but he didn't want to drag Celis's father into even more danger than this.

In Lux's memory, Prime Minister Nulph was a noble of the former anti Old Empire faction. He was a direct subordinate of Count Atismata.

He made use of his skill when establishing the government of the New Kingdom and he had made a great contribution as Queen Raffi's aide until now.

There was no doubt that he was the only person who was worthy for Dist to recommend as the next king candidate.

Therefore, the possibility was extremely high that he was trying to stop the scheme of Waybra and Sieg. Lux was also on alert about that possibility.

Lux said his thanks to Dist and left the government building along with Philuffy.

And then they put on the hood of their overcoat to shadow their faces and headed towards the other government building while avoiding people's gazes.

"Phi-chan. Is there any strange presence?"

"Wait a bit, my eyes will get used to it soon."

Philuffy's excellent eyesight seemed to be effective even in the night's darkness.

Currently, it didn't seem there was anything strange in the building where Sieg was staying but—

"How will we enter..... There are guards....."

It seemed the guards around the government building wasn't Sieg's private soldiers but the guards of the New Kingdom.

In other words they couldn't normally ask to enter inside.

"Want to try getting close? The wall, it looks climbable."

"Eh?"

Philuffy said that with a serious face while he was wondering what to do.

The building's wall was made from brick with rough and uneven surface, but it was too reckless for a human to climb there.

As expected Lux thought he misheard her, but—

"Master made me do it for training, so just this much is easy. I'm going."

"Wai-, Phi-chan!?"

Without even any time to stop her, Philuffy approached the building, jumped over the fence and entered into the grounds.

A minute later. She slightly waved her hand from the edge of the rooftop to show that it was okay.

(No, it's impossible for me to scale a wall without using a Drag-Ride.....)

"....."

When Lux conveyed that using hand gesture, it seemed that his meaning was conveyed and Philuffy drew back into the building for a moment.

After that when she showed herself on the rooftop once more, she lowered down a rope that she seemed to find somewhere. Lux used that to climb.

There weren't any guards on the rooftop, but there was a stair that continued into inside the building.

"We can enter from here?"

"Seems so. There isn't any presence, sound, or anything from the building though."

"....."

Was it just as he expected, that Sieg's subordinates were already annihilated?

The space of the building was comparable to more than ten houses. It was really spacious.

It must be reserved to house Sieg's force, but—

Lux walked down the stairs while thinking that and explored the building that was made from stone.

But—.

".....There is no one? But with how there are guards around the building, it should look like Sieg's force is staying here."

"Lu-chan. There is, rain's smell."

Philuffy looked up to the sky and whispered that the moment they came out into an open corridor that faced the courtyard.

Rain—

If he remembered right, there was no rain during the first and second parade.

Just as he thought. The loop was only a reset of people's perception, while time was moving normally without a doubt.

If the rain this time erased any trace like the smell and the like, there might be no problem even if they acted in a bigger scale.

".....Let's search the rear entrance. If the Drag-Ride that is recording the secret information that Waybra had is going to come, it might come from there."

"It might be, from the courtyard you know? If it's a Drake, it can use camouflage."

".....I see!"

The private soldier possessing the video recording were using special equipment type Drake, so it didn't need to come from the rear entrance.

In short it would be fine as long as there was a space that a Drag-Ride could use to sneak in, so the route's possibility was the rooftop, rear entrance, and the courtyard.

"Perhaps, it might be better to split."

"Right. Phi-chan, please take care of the rear entrance. I'll try searching the courtyard. —Be careful."

Philuffy nodded shortly, then they split up. Lux started walking inside the building.

While he headed towards the courtyard in a straight line, he sensed a presence and stopped moving.

"—Tsu!?"

He almost leaked out his voice, but he closed his mouth with his own right hand.

In the courtyard, there was a girl facing a Drake that had dispelled its camouflage.

A black haired girl wearing the New Kingdom's military uniform—Sania Remist.

(How!? Why is she here?)

Hayes's three direct subordinates in Heiburg—Cerberus.

She was the leader of that and she once infiltrated into the New Kingdom's Academy as a spy.

After trying to steal the Grand Force, in the attack against the New Kingdom—the Imperial Capital Recapture Plan, she fought Celis and lost. Then she should still be imprisoned.

Even when the New Kingdom tried to use her as material for negotiation with the Heiburg Republic, they made the excuse that what Cerberus did was done under Hayes's arbitrary decision and abandoned her. This girl who already didn't even have any place to belong was—

"Lord Sieg. How is it? The recording's confirmation—"

"Hm? Ah, never mind. More importantly, so you are my last subordinate?"

"Yes! For some reason I was the only one who arrived at the meeting point. There should be a lot more but they are nowhere to—"

The member of the private soldiers wearing a Drake called Sania as Lord Sieg.

(Why? Why is he calling her Sieg?)

Lux was puzzled for a few seconds before he noticed.

This world was already a fictive world. Everyone other than Lux and Philuffy were captured by the perception created by the mastermind.

In actuality, Lux was also hallucinating the existence of Magialka, Singlen and Aeril before.

That private soldier too, in other words—he was under the influence of the perception manipulation that made him under the impression that Sania was the real Sieg.

(But, what's the point of doing this? Is Sania herself also made to think that she is Sieg? Or perhaps she is ordered by someone to do this—)

The event was moving even while Lux was pondering that.

"I see, so you didn't meet anyone else. Then you are the last huh. The number also matches what the guys before you said. I'll take the recording you have. Come."

"Yes-!"

The man dispelled the Drake armor he wore and followed behind Sania.

They walked on the wide corridor. Lux also followed them while hiding his presence.

And then when they opened the door to the office that was at the deepest part of the building, a strange sight entered his eyes.

"Lord Sieg? Is there anything that you wish to talk about?"

"—!?"

A sea of blood spread behind the door.

The corpses of several people that already had their head reaped dyed the gorgeous red carpet of the office dark.

Amidst the thick smell of death, the soldier who entered into the room didn't

make any change in expression.

Even for Lux who was watching from the side, it was a terrifyingly bizarre sight.

"There is nothing to talk about. Thank you for your work until now."

Sieg Kreutzer.....not, Sania who pretended to be him casually lifted the Drake's Sword Device that she received from the man.

It was swung down sharply. Right after that the man's head fell on the carpet.

"—!?"

"You see, I am a trap."

Sania looked down to the head of the man falling on the floor and muttered to no one in particular.

On the day of the parade, Sieg's subordinates came here bringing the Drake that was stored with the image recording.

Perhaps Sania became Sieg's replacement using perception manipulation and remained here waiting for the private soldier to eliminate every single one of them.

(I'm too late? But, who is Sania conspiring with? Who in the world is the mastermind—)

Someone who could bring out Sania who was imprisoned because of serious crimes was limited in the New Kingdom.

It was impossible even for the consuls if they only had an ordinary position.

It had to be the prison director, or perhaps someone even more above—

"However, to think that you came. Lux Arcadia. You haven't changed it seems, thrusting yourself into danger like always."

"-.....!?"

Lux was shocked that a voice suddenly came from behind.

Lux instantly leaped towards the corridor and rolled on the ground. Right after that a Sword Device that the man swung cut empty air.

".....You are, Ignid!?"

A red haired man with distinctive trait of bristling front hair.

He was a member of Cerberus just like Sania. He should be similarly imprisoned.

"Hee, how kind of you to remember me. Or perhaps, this is what they call the knight's obligation?"

"For you to be able to perceive our true identity, it seems that right now Endless's binding isn't working on you."

Sania who was inside the office turned his way and muttered, then she tossed away the Sword Device in her hand to the floor.

And then she pulled out a new Sword Device from her sheath and pointed it towards Lux.

"Kuh.....!"

There was no room to move freely even if he summoned a Drag-Ride into this cramped place.

Inevitably a sword fight as well as hand to hand combat would be more effective here.

Lux had also accumulated training, but he was only at the level of above average among the officer cadets. Compared to his skill as a Drag-Knight, his strength in hand-to-hand combat was decisively inferior.

He couldn't possibly match these two who had accumulated training as spies from the Heiburg Republic.

(But, I cannot escape from here! I have to somehow capture these two without killing them—)

Lux also pulled out his Sword Device in response and took his stance.

Just now Sania called herself a trap.

That trap was double layered.

Most likely in this third loop Sania acted as Sieg Kreutzer's replacement in order to take away the image recording from his subordinates.

And then Ignid was following in hiding in order to search for people who escaped from the perception curse like Lux.

(The enemy mastermind also predicted the existence like us who noticed the world revision and tried to investigate!?)

That possibility was definitely high.

If Lux was in the enemy's position, there was no way he could allow someone who noticed this loop and the fake reality to live.

"Why are you two here!? How did you escape from the prison!?"

Lux made his words into weapons to hold back the enemy as well as attempting to extract information from them.

But, what came was only wordless sword thrusts from Sania and Ignid.

The attack went through the shortest route with the fastest speed. The Sword Devices's tips approached Lux's sides.

Sania charged in Lux's gap of consciousness that resulted from his attempt to converse.

"Kuh.....!?"

He barely dodged by twisting his body, but Ignid pressed on by slashing at him.

—'Fast!'

He barely deflected the tip, but pain pierced his upper arm.

It was an abnormal physical strength that couldn't be explained just by being good in hand-to-hand combat.

"This strength, what in the world.....!?"

"—You have a good instinct huh, hero-san?"

Ignid's eyes were tinged with mysterious light. Geometrically patterned tattoo surfaced on his cheek.

And then he tossed away his Sword Device and tacked Lux into the office.

".....!?"

Lux was pushed down face up on the floor in the middle of the room. He couldn't move as though he was crucified.

Physically Ignid was somewhat higher than Lux. He held Lux down and he couldn't even twitch.

Sania quickly took away the Sword Device from Lux's hand.

With that the match here was decided.

Looking closer, a similar tattoo was surfacing on Sania's cheek too. It looked similar to Soffice's tattoo but—it felt different somehow.

"We are forbidden to kill you. —You narrowly escaped death."

"What do you mean? My coming here was already predicted by your master?"

"No way."

Sania shrugged and reeled a rope to bind Lux.

"We receive an order to get rid of anyone who came here and noticed the truth. You are saved because it will be troubling if you are killed here."

"....."

Sania and Ignid.

Their words were abstract, but it supported Lux's inference until now.

If someone high in the New Kingdom took them out from the prison, as expected it matched with the mastermind's expectation.

The imperial princess of the Lords, Listelka once attempted to win over Lux and the others, the Seven Dragon Paladins by means of brainwashing.

In other words, the shrine maiden of oracle Listelka knew.

If she was able to obtain Avalon, she would be able to obtain subordinates that wouldn't be able to betray her.

And then, the abnormal power that Sania and Ignid displayed.

Most likely these two had constraints so they absolutely couldn't turn traitor applied to them and now they were controlled by Avalon or the Automata.

"Dear god, so you two are controlled by the mastermind!"

It pained Lux's heart even though they were formerly enemies who tried to destroy the New Kingdom.

But, Sania who noticed Lux's thinking shook in amusement.

"Hahahahahaha.....! It's not so bad that an enemy like you needs to pity us. In the first place everyone else other than the one standing at the top are nothing more than someone else's pitiful puppets. Everyone is nothing more than wretched existences to be conveniently controlled, used, dancing to the string. Even you are like that, you will only get used as a pawn called the hero of the New Kingdom from here on."

She was talking with humane expression and tone, not as an inhuman creature.

"Isn't this wonderful. We fell into misfortune because of the effort of you all. But it's not anyone's fault. It was our fault because we lost. No matter how hard I work, I was unable to escape from the fetters of all of you selfish nobles."

"....."

Sania and Ignid at the beginning were orphans because of war damage in the Heiburg Republic. They were picked up by the military, endured through a harsh training and became elite Drag-Knights.

But, in the end they failed in the Imperial Capital Recapture Plan and arrived at the fate of getting discarded.

"Even so, this is better than spending our whole life in that prison. I'm thankful to that person. I am able to properly use this life, my pride as a Drag-Knight from that hellish training in the battlefield. I am able to win against you in this place!"

".....Such thing! You are wrong!"

Could such thing really be called victory?

Lux couldn't possibly agree no matter what.

"You resigned yourself to a fate that you didn't choose by your own will, but forced on you by someone else. Even so, can you call that living with pride? You

are only made to think that by Ouroboros's curse!"

That feeling welled up in his chest. It became words that he squeezed out from his mouth.

"Walking in a path where you can believe in yourself even when the world doesn't go as you expect it. Isn't that what it means to live!? Sania!"

".....You don't understand. A blessed person like you can't understand."

It wasn't Sania but Ignid who replied to Lux's yell.

His tone wasn't feverish like Nocturnal that was driven by Elixir—he sounded resigned with a tone that was similar with his natural tone.

"You don't notice your own abnormality. About your own ability that is able to continue to win. Of the effort needed to train until that level. That's why it's impossible for us to be saved. Understanding or the like is impossible, no matter what—"

"....."

"There is no need for any sympathy. After a while, you too will become a [terminal] just like us. Not as a disposable part like us, but as the [hero of the New Kingdom], the supreme tool—"

".....Guh!"

Right after Sania said that, Ignid pressed harder on Lux's neck to take away his consciousness.

The blood flow to this head was severed. At the moment his consciousness was getting farther, the air of the room suddenly shook.

.

"Lu-chan, isn't strange, at all."

It was a calm and monotone voice.

Lux gasped in surprise at the usual slow tone that was just like her.

Sania Remist quickly brandished the Sword Device she stole from Lux and burst into motion.

The direction of her jump was toward the room's entrance.

Just as Lux guessed, Philuffy stepped into the room.

She twisted her body and dodged the Sword Device's thrust, then she instantly took Sania's arm and twisted.

Crack!

"Guh, AAaAH.....!?"

Sania whose right elbow was destroyed showed an anguished expression and groaned.

Seeing that Ignid reached toward his own Sword Device. By that time Typhon's short sword stabbed into the back of his hand.

"Uguah!?"

Typhon's Sword Device that Philuffy carried didn't suit for locking sword or the like because it was a short sword type, but it was useful as a throwing weapon or close range combat.

It was an action unique to Philuffy who excelled in close quarter combat using the martial arts Magialca taught her.

"Ei"

The instant Ignid faltered, Philuffy's front kick whooshed through.

She made use of the recoil from the kick to leap and her hand chop fell onto the head of Sania whose arm was broken.

The two were suppressed in the blink of an eye with only two attacks.

"God, dammit..... This, monster.....!"

Sania who lied down on the floor glared at the two with an angry look.

Lux's head instantly turned blank hearing that parting remark.

"_____"

"Lu-chan, don't."

Stopped by Philuffy's voice, Lux came back to himself with a gasp.

His fist was strongly clenched above Sania's head as though it was going to be swung down.

The reason was surely—no, it was clear even without thinking it.

His body reacted to those words that ridiculed Philuffy.

"We have to ask who gave them the order. It's no good, if you make them faint."

"You're.....right."

Lux took a deep breath to calm down.

He nodded while receiving the Sword Device of Bahamut that Philuffy took back from Sania.

The two who seemed to be controlled by someone didn't appear that they would easily confess in this situation, even so there was no doubt that they were important clues that were connected to the mastermind.

"More importantly is Phi-chan yourself alright? Was there anyone lying in wait at the rear entrance for example—"

Lux cooled his head that got heated up while tying up Sania with a rope.

An unexpected reply came from the mouth of Philuffy who was tying Ignid with a comfortable movement.

"Yes. Someone was there. It was dark and they were wearing a hood though. They had a small build."

"What!?"

An unknown person was observing this place.

In that case they might have grasped this situation and called their comrade here.

The figure of Sieg Kreutzer who was murdered in the previous loop flashed in Lux's mind and he shuddered.

"It's alright. That person observed for a bit, but their smell wasn't that of an Automata. It looks like we still haven't been noticed. That's why I think it's fine to not hurry and escape."

"....."

Lux's feeling went past admiration and into amazement seeing Philuffy who was unperturbed even in this situation.

He wondered what he had to do to be able to be that calm.

In a sense, she might be someone who possessed the caliber of a king even more than someone like Lux.

His expression abruptly loosened when such funny thought crossed his mind.

"I'm glad that Phi-chan came together with me."

Actually he didn't want to drag her into this dangerous situation, but if Philuffy wasn't here, he would have gotten captured by Sania just now and everything would have been over.

It was different from the past when he carried out the revolution by himself.

Lux once more felt relieved at the existence of a comrade that he could rely on—

".....You are going to regret it you know? Not killing us right away."

Sania whose hands were tied with rope on her back looked up at Lux with a fearless expression.

"You are planning to not speak the identity of the mastermind no matter what?"

"—That's not what I mean, the time limit is approaching. The time limit for existences like me that is."

".....Wha-!?"

The instant when their vigilance to the surroundings relaxed with the opponents restrained.

Sania's face changed in that opening that wasn't worthy to be even called carelessness.

"O, gu.....! —Gi, AAAAAGAAAAAaAAH.....!"

The geometrically patterned tattoo imprinted on Sania's face shined crimson

and her flesh began to transform.

Her body slowly crumbled. It was being turned inside out from the inside.

Slime that looked like a lump of meat with the color and smell of entrails was summoned from the bodies of the two.

Part 4

"Someone got caught in the net huh..... Our turn will be soon nanodesu."

Around the time the incident was occurring at the government building where Sieg Kreutzer was staying.

A girl was standing on the viewing platform that could look down on the capital's townscape from the height.

The Automata wearing a blue gown with a hood hiding her rabbit ears was the Gear Leader of the Ark, La Krusche.

Beside her, another girl clad in a Divine Drag-Ride landed down.

She was also an Automata that was secretly maneuvering following her master's command— Ney Louches of the Hall.

In her expression there was a trace remaining from the time when she was getting along with Krulcifer at the Ymir Theocracy.

"Do you need assistance? I'm free so I'm alright with helping dearimasu. Fufufu, this robot is really stupid after all, so I might be able to snatch the achievement from her dearimasuu."

"Before treating other people as idiots, you should hide your true feelings nanodesu. Your assistance is unneeded so please stay at your station. I'll be the one to report to master."

"Cheh, dearimasu. Even so it's convenient isn't it, that [Parasite] of yours. It's like a demon."

"....."

Other than the common abilities that the Automatas shared as Gear Leaders who were controlling the Ruins, they were also equipped with unique personal abilities that made use of nanomachines.

The power of nanomachines that La Krusche possessed, Parasite, was able to give instructions to other living things by directly injecting a certain amount of it into the target's body.

She was able to send orders to the parasite type Abyss that was administered into a human's body to devour the host's life and grow.

If the host harbored defiant intentions, it was even possible to make the Abyss hatch right at that instant.

In other words, Sania and Ignid right now were puppets controlled by La Krusche.

"But, this too is for the sake of saving people isn't it dearimasu? That's what the current master said."

"—Yes, that's right nanodesu. This too is for the sake of peace. It should be so."

The same scene crossed the minds of the two who were conversing.

.

In a chalk white ward that was filled with the smell of medicine.

There were seven sisters who belonged to the clan of the Key's Supervisor.
They had lost their parents.

These seven girls who were afflicted with an incurable disease had lost their prospect of survival. They were remodeled by a scientist girl called Arshalia who developed the technology of Avalon. Each of them was entrusted with the duty of managing a Ruin.

They obtained eternal life, in exchange they lost their life as humans.

Even so they were grateful for obtaining life where their own personality remained behind.

The meaning of living was to achieve something.

Currently that dying wish was planted deep in their roots even while carrying out the orders of their new master.

Because of that.

"It has to be accomplished, nanodesu. Even if that means treating them as disposable parts—"

An emotionless program pushed their backs and they carried it out.

The demonic hand that their current master released.

Part 5

"Drag-Ride. It might be better to use it, if not we cannot win."

Lux also nodded at Philuffy's opinion.

After the two of them rushed out from the room, they ran through the open corridor while going out to the courtyard of the government building that was wide open in donut shape.

After securing an open space for the present, the two summoned their Divine Drag-Rides at the same time.

.

"—Manifest, violent dragon that devours the flesh and blood of the gods. Sever the sky of dark clouds, Bahamut!"

"—Activate. The godslaying great dragon that smashes the star and gouges the end. Unleash the fangs of a hundred heads and kill the almighty, Typhon."

.

They pressed the button on the handle of their Sword Device and strongly thought while chanting their respective pass code.

Particles of faint light whirled before their eyes and two great dragons formed.

"Connect – On"

The two then muttered at the same time further and the mechanical great dragons split. They transformed into countless armor parts that were equipped by the two.

The two Drag-Knights who were close to being the strongest even in the New Kingdom finished their battle preparations.

It took ten-odd seconds since going out to the courtyard until now at the shortest.

And then less than three seconds after that, the two evil demons that

pursued them leaped towards them.

Their shape wasn't like the lump of meat at the beginning, they had transformed into terrifying monsters that looked like giant centipedes.

"UGAAAAAAAAA!"

"OOOOOOaAAAAAH.....!"

It wasn't a fighting yell, but the roar of monsters.

Or perhaps they were unleashing strange sounds that was like a scream while raising their protruding sharp claws.

That attack itself possessed power to a degree that was high rank even among the Abyss.

But, Lux's consciousness staggered and receded when he blocked the attack using his great sword.

"What, the. This is....."

"Hihihi, what's wrong!? Chore prince!"

The voice of Ignid that became irregularly dissonant violated Lux's eardrum.

His whole body felt fatigued and he felt intense dizziness.

Most likely the effect from the intense battle at Avalon was still remaining in his body.

Perhaps the fatigue was welling up due to him using Bahamut that put a large burden on his body.

The opponent didn't overlook that opening and made a horizontal swing. Lux was blown away backward.

"Kuh!"

But, no matter how weakened his body was, he couldn't be defeated in this critical situation.

Lux tried to recover his balance somehow, but during that time a purple miasma covered the area.

"Lu-chan. Don't, breathe it in."

".....-!? Poison!"

Because they were facing an open courtyard, the poison mist that Ignid breathed out immediately dispersed.

But, Lux's body was paralyzed and couldn't move properly perhaps because he already inhaled some.

"Take this, and this! What's wrongg!?"

Ignid swung his claws that were shaped like a huge scythe. Lux barely defended using his sword.

But, he was unable to deal with it.

The high fever that suddenly surged up in him stole his concentration, delaying the movement of his whole body by a breath.

Lux possessed extraordinary strength as a Drag-Knight, but he got his back against the wall with his body being invaded by poison.

In a sense, he was being pressed into a disadvantage that was quite great even among everything until now.

"Hyahahaha! Nice look you got there! This is easy. This is far easier compared to that monster that looked like a girl over there....."

The centipede Abyss swung his claws even more fiercely while laughing mockingly.

He twisted that long torso which hit Lux like a whip.

But,

"—Shut up"

Inside Lux who was unable to breath satisfactorily until now, a rage that was like a blazing flame was lit up.

The senses of his body became hot as though he was being burned from hearing Philuffy getting insulted once more.

Right after that, the vortex of shockwave from Howling Roar attacked Ignid who transformed into a centipede Abyss.

"Guh!?"

By wresting his torso to avoid a direct hit, his attack timing was delayed by less than half a second.

The next instant, a flash of sword that was unleashed using Quick Draw counterattacked and tore the torso.

"GE, eEeeEEEEEEH!?"

Ignid's torso was severed into two and he shrieked.

When Lux prepared to destroy his head with a returning slash, the movement of the armored arm that was holding the great sword stopped.

".....Lu-chan. That person, he is beaten already, see."

The one who grabbed the arm from behind and stopped it was Typhon that Philuffy wore.

"....."

Lux took a deep breath and looked at the crumbling corpse of Ignid.

Perhaps the attack just now cut the core and dealt lethal damage. The body was twitching while turning into ash.

"Splendid. So it wasn't a fluke. The power of all of you who crushed us on multiple occasions—"

On the other hand, Sania who was similarly transformed into an Abyss was also defeated by Philuffy.

It seemed her core was also destroyed. Her body was crumbling into pieces while saying that at the end.

She displayed a satisfied expression, and then—

"Wait! Who is it who turned your body like that!? Who is it that created the loop of this parade!? Tell us, please!"

Lux didn't expect to receive an answer.

But, unexpectedly the reply came immediately.

"It's, Prime Minister Nulph..... Chore prince, if it's with your strength, surely it

will be possible to reach the truth....."

"_____"

Prime Minister Nulph.

The aide of Queen Raffi in the New Kingdom.

As expected he was the perpetrator who obtained Avalon and created this loop.

The girl in front of him told him that it was the answer.

"But, don't forget. You too after all are just a pawn like us. Only that—"

Sania only said that and her body crumbled completely.

And then, silence returned to the surroundings.

"-.....!?"

After feeling relief through getting the answer for the time being, fatigue surged through his body all at once and Lux dispelled Bahamut.

Beside him, Philuffy also dispelled her armor. He hid his tiredness and asked her.

"Phi, chan. Any enemy presence around us?"

"No one nearby.....I think?"

Philuffy answered Lux's question with the same tone like usual that was at her own pace.

"Do you think, their words are true?"

"I don't know. But—"

Lux paused his words for a bit and looked up silently towards the waning moon.

"I think, at the end, Sania's feelings came out for a bit."

"....."

Lux and Philuffy worked together to dig the courtyard.

After burying the corpses of the two along with their Drag-Ride, they

investigated the building starting from the office through every nook and cranny.

Then, they found the Sword Device of a Drake that Sania obtained from Sieg's private soldier just now.

The owner.....already died.

"With the user dead, that means—"

One of Sieg Kreutzer's private soldiers who was beheaded before this.

It could be concluded that it was recording information that could shake the New Kingdom.

"Lu-chan, what will we do now?"

After flying away from the government building using Wyvern, Lux discussed with Philuffy in a back alley.

A Sword Device that lost its user could register a new user by holding it in front of the corresponding Drag-Ride and reactivating it.

And so, it would be possible to operate it if they could just find the Drake that this Sword Device was contracted to, but most likely this private soldier of Sieg wasn't using the Drag-Ride hangar of the New Kingdom.

It wasn't like they were back to square one, but now they had no other way than trying to search the private land of Sieg.

"Let's return for now. To our inn."

In the end they had to hear the information directly from someone who was in the know.

Therefore Lux decided that it was better to get a fresh start at this timing by returning for now.

"Right. Then, should we part here?"

"Eh.....?"

Lux was bewildered for an instant at Philuffy's suggestion.

This was Philuffy who called herself as Lux's bodyguard, so Lux completely

thought that they would return together but—

"I remember, a little bit of business. I want to return slowly."

"I see..... Then, let's meet again at the inn."

"Lu-chan. Are you really okay?"

Philuffy stared fixedly at Lux with a straightforward gaze.

Lux didn't want to worry her even more than this.

"Yes. I'm fine. I'm only a bit tired so—"

"Got it. Be careful."

After forcing a smile, Lux parted from Philuffy and headed to the main street.

Then, fatigue suddenly surged through him and he felt dizzy. He sat down on a nearby bench.

"Kuh..... My, body....."

The moment he relaxed his mind, his body became feverish and intense pain ran through him.

His breathing became rough and wheezing, the sight in front of his eyes distorted and misted.

In his hand was a Sword Device that was his only clue.

He had to confirm the secret recording hidden in this Drake that could shake the New Kingdom and make his judgment.

From there he had to pull in the truth and pressed on Prime Minister Nulph.

Lux's plan was progressing well.

—But, it felt like he was overlooking something.

It was something inexplicable that couldn't even be called out of place.

"....."

Prickle He felt pain at one corner of his head. His consciousness faded away and the reality became hazy.

"—Lux-kun. Get a hold of yourself."

".....tsu"

When he noticed, Lux was looking up at the moon.

At the fountain plaza that was made from stone.

There was a silhouette looking down on Lux on the bench there.

"Was it also a moonlight night like this? That time when I first met you—"

"Krulcifer, san?"

The moon that looked magical, and the lighting of the plaza.

The two light sources showered them with light. The water splash of the fountain was sparkling.

Krulcifer in her uniform looked at Lux and smiled in relieve.

He wondered how many minutes had passed since he parted with Philuffy just now.

It seemed he lost consciousness for a while because of the strange fatigue.

"I'm glad. I happened to see you just now. But you were sleeping on the bench. No matter what that was too defenseless. Or perhaps—are you not feeling well?"

"I'm, fine now. It looks like I'm a bit nervous from the parade."

"Is that so? But don't force yourself, rest for a bit more like this."

Lux gasped in realization when Krulcifer told him that.

She was also sitting on the bench and without him noticing he was getting a lap pillow from her.

She had a slender body style, but when his head was placed on her thighs like this, he noticed once more that she possessed the softness of a feminine body.

When he became conscious of that, Lux's cheeks flashed red.

The light of the capital at night was faint.

Illuminated by that, the time was passing quietly.

"It's mysterious. When I met you for the first time, I never thought that the day our relationship became like this will come, but—"

"Now that you mention it."

Lux who replied like that slipped out a wry smile unconsciously.

When he saw her for the first time, he was fascinated by Krulcifer's beauty. Honestly he was feeling complicated about that.

However, he was also the same in regards of never imagining that their relationship would become one where it was undecided whether to accept the confession or not.

"Yes. But, when I imagined what if at that time you didn't get lost into the Academy, I shuddered a bit. Around this time I would be Sir Balzeride's wife and become a tool for opening the Ruins..... I would be used till the end before getting disposed—surely at that time I would have been killed."

Krulcifer spoke smoothly while quietly hugging her own shoulders.

It hadn't been one year since that incident, but it felt like something that happened a long time ago.

That was just how much various things had happened since he met her.

"Speaking about it, Krulcifer-san chose me to act as your lover at that time. Was that a coincidence? Or else—"

Krulcifer splendidly won the Lux competition that was held in the Academy because of Relie's mischief. She then requested him to become her fake lover, but if at that time Krulcifer didn't win, what would have happened then?

"I had my eye on you because of the matter of Bahamut, so even without that event I would made my request with a different method."

"As I thought, Krulcifer-san was thinking it properly."

"I am far more calculating than you thought you know?"

Lux got cold sweat in his heart seeing Krulcifer's smile that seemed to be filled with significance.

(Well, from the beginning I already thought that Krulcifer-san is really

calculating though.....)

He hesitated saying that out loud honestly.

At any rate what she said had great persuasiveness.

"I've lived like that all the time until now. Because I was taken from the Ymir Theocracy's Ruin, I had to do that in order to live in the Einvolk house."

"....."

Krulcifer had a special position because of her origin that was from the Ruin Hall. She sought for people's affection more than anyone and earnestly worked hard in order to get recognized.

However, because she displayed unparalleled strength, on the contrary she was instead kept at a distance from her family and became isolated. That was her past.

However now she understood that it was a misunderstanding.

Through the case that happened when Krulcifer returned home with Lux, she noticed that her stepfather Stiyl acted like that in order to keep her away from those who would try to use her.

Right now she should be forming a good relationship with the butler Alterize and her other family members too.

"At a glance, Lux-kun looks innocent like a child and full of openings. But you are hiding amazing strength. That was my impression of you but—that changed."

"So your impression changed....."

'Even though I think that is a good enough impression already.'

When Lux was going to continue like that, Krulcifer continued her words first.

"It changed, to a far better one than before."

Krulcifer's cheeks reddened slightly and she smiled mischievously.

Lux's temperature rose from the passionate gaze showed by the girl who was always calm and collected.

"Whether it was at that time of engagement, and also when I went back to the Ymir Theocracy. When I'm in trouble you never abandoned me and came to save me. You became my strength regardless of race or pedigree."

".....That's, even Krulcifer-san did the same for me."

Lux said that to hide his embarrassment, however that was also his true feeling.

"Krulcifer-san always went along with my recklessness, and you came to save me when I was captured."

Even at the battle against Celis that put the continuation of his attendance in the Academy at stake, and also when he was captured by the Lords, and at various other occurrences, she risked her life for him.

When Lux pointed that out, she unexpectedly formed a lonely smile.

"My bad but, for me it's a bit different."

"Eh.....?"

Krulcifer peered onto Lux's face with the illumination of the lamp light and the fountain's splash behind her.

The blue eyed beautiful girl showed a wistful smile.

"I don't know about the other girls, but I wouldn't fight if it wasn't for your sake. Of course, there were also situations where, because of my obligation and status, I had to fight in order to save my comrades but, the real reason I fought until now was for the sake of something that cannot be expressed by such words."

Saying that, Krulcifer brought her face closer towards Lux who was still on her lap.

She gently kissed at the corner of the lips of the startled Lux.

"_____"

The water sound of the fountain vanished for a few seconds from the world.

The refined and seductive lips had a fleeting sensation.

It only touched for a bit, then her face immediately parted from him.

".....I did all of that, because I wanted you to turn towards me. Because I wanted to attract your attention. Because, I wanted to make you fall in love with me. I'm sorry."

The cheeks of Krulcifer who was staring at the fountain looked red even under the very dim light.

"Krulcifer, san....."

It was very straightforward.

Lux's words faltered from her frank confession.

"Do you think I'm, contemptible? But, surely that's what you think. I'm pretending to be composed, but I care about other people's opinion of me more than anyone. That kind of way of life was imprinted on me since I was a child. That's why I put up a front to show my flawless side to other people. I want other people to only see my good side."

"....."

Lux didn't understand why Krulcifer was exposing herself in this place.

But, surely, half of it was because of Lux's fault.

His unique status as a criminal that didn't allow him to marry.

And the wall of his heart because of his own unique upbringing.

Because of those, until now he was unable to accept her feelings, that was—

".....No. You are wrong."

Lux immediately said that because that was also something that he had stifled in his heart until now.

All this time, he was covering up his feeling towards the girls—towards Krulcifer that was liking him as the opposite sex.

Exactly because of that, he had to respond to her here.

"Because, I also love Krulcifer-san. Not just as a fellow member of Syvalles or as a classmate, but as a man."

"Lux, kun?"

Lux lifted his head from her thighs and sat straight on the bench. He stared at her face from close up.

The eyes of Krulcifer who averted her gaze slightly were opened wide.

The beating of his heart quickened painfully, the inside of his head became hot.

With the feeling called love filling his heart, Lux quickly stole her lips.

.

"_____"

Once more noises and scenery vanished from the surroundings for around a minute.

Whether it was the wondrous water splash of the fountain, or the heat of the night of the parade.

Even the clatters of the people that were leaking out from the countless houses vanished. It became the world of only the two of them.

"....."

"Err, Krulcifer-san?"

A few seconds after Lux separated their lips, he panicked seeing Krulcifer who was completely petrified.

He was feeling in suspense wondering whether he had done something bad, but—

"-.....!"

The next moment, she leaped into Lux's chest and hugged him tightly.

"Ah....."

The scent of her hair drifted from her nape.

He became intoxicated with the warmth and softness that he felt from across her uniform.

"Please. Don't let go, stay like this, just for a bit more—"

Her sweet whisper tickled Lux's ears.

Like that their hearts connected together for a while.

.

"Then, I'll be going back now. Airi too is surely getting worried. Thank you."

"Yes. Lux-kun too, be careful—. Or perhaps, do you want to come to the room where I'm staying right now?"

".....-!?"

The flirtatious glance that was filled with sensuality made Lux stiffened instantly.

It was a very appealing invitation, but he turned it down.

Because if he fell into temptation here, his brake would stop working without a doubt.

If he went until her room, even Lux would be unable to hold himself back.

Once again Lux told Krulcifer that he wished to wait until his criminal collar was taken off. Krulcifer nodded back firmly in response.

"That's unfortunate, but it can't be helped. I'll wait for a little bit more then."

Lux smiled wryly while walking on the main street together with her.

The warmth of her hand that was naturally holding his hand drove off the chill of the night of January.

"....."

Because of the perception manipulation's curse Krulcifer couldn't see, but Lux noticed the silhouette of an Automata.

The Automata was also observing secretly at noon, but she was only watching without attacking or anything else. Lux was gradually understanding what was the meaning of this action.

No, it was still too early to decide.

At the present phase, it was nothing more than conjecture.

What he could think of was that this was him being monitored to see how he was interacting with other people at the surface.

Most likely they were waiting for the chance to activate Endless once more at the end of the parade.

Krulcifer herself had never received Baptism, she only ever had a bit of Elixir injected into her.

When the Dragon Marauders attacked the Academy in the past, Aeryl handed to everyone Elixir in order to resist the mental pollution of the Ragnarok Iblis. They used it although it was just a slight amount.

From the view point of the mastermind, they must be keeping an eye on the possibility that if Lux explained the situation to Krulcifer who was a Xfer, she might be able to dispel the curse on the consciousness from the world revision.

And then, a hypothesis formed inside Lux seeing that the mastermind was cautious against Krulcifer who was a Xfer.

It was about the possibility that the moment Lux talked about the truth to her, she might be eliminated.

And about the intention that the mastermind would use Endless at the very least one more time to create a loop.

(The last finishing touch is still remaining..... Then—)

He couldn't expose Krulcifer to danger until that time.

He could only pretend that he hadn't noticed anything just like before and made a show of getting into a relationship with her.

If Lux turned down Krulcifer's confession, the enemy would surely notice that he remembered the first and second loop so—

(.....But, this feeling of mine, it's not a lie.)

His feeling towards the girl in front of him wasn't just a show by any means.

That was why.

Only now he would be honest to his own feelings and enjoy his date with her.

In preparation for the next repeated loop and the truth that he hypothesized.

.

"Looks like the Automata doesn't notice me..... Then perhaps it will be time for negotiation soon."

Some distance away.

The voice of someone who was looking down on Lux and the others from the highest viewing platform in the capital wasn't heard by anyone.

Chapter 3 – The False, Truth

Part 1

"Geez, where did you go last night Nii-san? Furthermore this time you even enjoyed nightlife. Today it will be a scolding for you."

"Sorry. I drank too much and got a headache, so please don't be too hard on me."

"No. Lux-san. I heard that when a male caused a problem related to a female, the wound will be shallower if you honestly confess you know?"

"....."

The second day of the third parade.

Lux was greatly troubled from receiving a barrage of questions first thing in the morning from Airi and Noct who had their reproachful gazes on when the sun had only come out.

From Lux's point of view, he had investigated the building where Sieg Kreutzer was staying and splendidly obtained a clue to approach the truth, but from the perspective of Airi and Noct who didn't know anything, it could be said to be only natural for them to be like this.

Last night he slipped out in the middle of the party with Philuffy, furthermore he returned at different time from Philuffy, so it further invited misunderstanding.

But, there was no way he could tell the truth to Airi and Noct.

At present it was only Philuffy who was liberated from the perception curse by Endless.

He couldn't drag these two too into the deep affairs of the New Kingdom.

"That's why, I'm telling you two that's not it. While I was strolling by myself, I got sleepy—"

".....Noct, what do you think?"

"Yes, I think it sounds like a lie. I can imagine three other possible cases."

Noct raised three of her fingers with her usual composed expression.

(Why are they this motivated.....)

"First possibility, Lux-san got into a dating relationship with Philuffy-san. Like that they went to flirt together, but they will get jeered if they go back together, so they pretended to go back at different times."

"Is that correct Nii-san!?"

"No, that's why I said that's not it....."

Lux pacified his little sister who was pressing the question on him with her face getting closer while avoiding the first attack.

"From Lux-san's personality, this isn't the reaction when we hit the bull's eye. Then, the second possibility."

"You are still continuingthis?"

Lux retorted to Noct who was dispassionately mumbling while her hand was supporting her chin.

"Lux-san got into a nice atmosphere with Philuffy-san, but a hindrance appeared before they could progress further. Perhaps it might be something like a chance encounter with Krulcifer-san for example."

Twitch, Lux felt his innards went cold inside.

After all it was a definite fact that he borrowed Krulcifer-san's cooperation to investigate Prime Minister Nulph.

Furthermore last night he also encountered her again and he also became lovers with her—

"Somehow, it feels like this one is half right."

"No, well."

"Next, let's see. The third possibility, is a bit unclear for me. It doesn't seem like Lux-san was flirting with Celis-senpai who we expected to meet at the party today."

"Say, you don't need to force yourself to think up the third possibility."

More than ten minutes later, Lux somehow evaded the hounding of the two and departed outside the inn after telling them that he had business.

In reality, the third possibility that Noct raised about was incidentally correct about today.

The clue that he obtained last night, the Sword Device of the Drake that Sieg Kreutzer's soldier carried. It couldn't be summoned by Lux who didn't have a certified contract with it.

Therefore, as soon as possible—

Before the party in the evening that invited the noble visitors from every country started, he had to search for the location of the Drake, perform the contract recertification, and recover the image recording.

The recording contained a fact that might shake the present order of the New Kingdom.

If he could confirm the contents of the recording, he would be able to greatly draw near towards the true identity of the mastermind.

Throughout the morning he planned to look around each of the territories of Prime Minister Nulph that he owned within the Royal Capital.

By the time last night, he had already asked to negotiate with three people for their cooperation.

First—it was the older girl who he loved and respected, Celistia.

Part 2

8 o'clock in the morning.

Lux who got out of the inn visited the government building where one of the Four Great Nobles, the Ralgrus family, were staying.

On the surface, his reason to be here was to give a greeting before they met at the party.

Then, Celis who was also staying in the building welcomed him in surprise.

"Lu, Lux!? What's the matter? The party today should be starting in the evening. Do you have any business with—?"

"No, I wish to talk with Lord Dist for a bit."

"I, is that so....."

Celis's expression that broke into a smile as soon as she saw Lux's figure turned strangely dejected.

He felt pain in his heart when he recalled that they had become lovers once.

But, right now wasn't the time for romance.

Somehow, he had to obtain the proof of the mastermind—by searching the Drag-Ride hangar where the Drake of this Sword Device was stored, and confirm the recording there.

"Please, come in."

Regardless of his impolite visit in the early morning, Lord Dist welcomed him into the reception room pleasantly.

His stern expression looked like he had already guessed something.

"Has something happened in a place that is outside my supervision?"

With Celis also being in the same building, it was possible to also have her to attend in this talk, but Lux intentionally refrained from that.

Depending on what would happen after this, it might become a battle.

It would only cause chaos even if right now he involved Celis who was unable to perceive the loop of this parade.

"Yes. There is something that I wish Lord Dist to teach me within the extent of your knowledge."

Lux wanted to ask him about the villa or other related places in this Royal Capital that were owned by Sieg Kreutzer who was his fellow Four Great Noble. Because the possibility was high that this Drake was sleeping in one of those places.

—But, Dist's reply wasn't refusal, but a question.

"This isn't like you. Why is someone who has foresight like you this hurried?"

"....."

Lord Dist made a dubious face after receiving Lux's request.

It couldn't be helped that he was reluctant to talk.

Lux decided to immediately cut to the heart of the matter.

"This Drake's Sword Device is something that I picked up last night from a certain place. The owner seemed to be a Drag-Knight who was a private soldier of Sieg Kreutzer."

"In that case, you can just ask the person himself when he shows himself in today or tomorrow's party. —That doesn't seem possible from from how you are intentionally coming to meet me like this."

"There is no time. If I let go of this chance, I might lose the chance to arrive at the truth forever. A danger to the New Kingdom might be approaching."

The memory of the third day period of the looping parade.

Lux desperately pleaded without touching that fact.

Lux himself understood that he was asking for something unreasonable.

After all what he was doing was like asking Dist to lend him a hand in investigating Sieg with a suspicion towards Prime Minister Nulph while he wasn't showing any definite proof.

In the first place in the perception of the people from the world revision, Sieg

Kreutzer was still alive.

"....."

Naturally Dist who was a fellow Four Great Nobles wouldn't consent to his request.

If he leaked this request of Lux to the opponent, there was even the risk of war breaking out.

"—Just between you and me, we the Four Great Nobles were called for a meeting by her majesty the queen. Right after the parade ends, before the negotiation regarding Avalon begins for real, her majesty wishes to finish the contract."

".....Eh?"

Lux was bewildered that the talk was shifted to an unexpected direction.

It was a contract for the Four Great Nobles to lend their top class Drag-Knights under the direct control of the queen for several years.

Inevitably the Drag-Knights that were the retainers of the Four Great Nobles would also be included in that. It seemed the queen wished to supplement the kingdom's military power that was weakened.

Naturally this was the first time Lux heard about it because this was a vital political matter.

If it was Lisha then perhaps she knew about it, but—

(This is something that I didn't hear before. Was such talk advancing since before the parade started?)

"But, as a great feudal lord, we can't agree to something like a contract that halved our force for free. We have to ask for a suitable compensation."

"Compensation from the New Kingdom.....Avalon's technology and legacy. Mainly things like Drag-Rides, is that right?"

Dist nodded silently.

"The original proposer was Prime Minister Nulph. Lord Bugriser, Lord Zagha, and then the Kreutzer family too are showing accepting stances for this

proposal. It will be only if in the negotiation with other the countries ten days from now we can obtain advantageous terms though—"

"....."

The seven Automatas were already secretly maneuvering behind the scenes of the looping parade.

If Prime Minister Nulph was the mastermind and he already obtained Avalon, rather than obtaining advantageous results from negotiation, he could possibly make a deal by drawing out resources secretly without problem.

"The consuls of the Old Empire faction who doesn't wish for the New Kingdom's administration by Queen Raffi to continue for long are wishing for the negotiation's failure. With that they would be able to claim that her majesty isn't suited to lead the New Kingdom as expected and use every method to take her down from the throne."

If Prime Minister Nulph was supporting Queen Raffi, surely he would try to crush that movement of the opposing faction.

In other words, at the present preliminary step before the parade was over and people left the Royal Capital, and the negotiation with other countries to distribute Avalon's resources and technology started—

"Why are you telling me this?"

"You were a prince, but you didn't have the experience of becoming a ruler. Typically a ruler will try to nip the enemy force in the bud. That is the inevitable in every era and situation."

"——"

'However', Dist added while reaching out to a nearby drawer.

"That doesn't necessarily mean that I think doing that is always the right thing to do. Especially the way of doing things that doesn't care of the method, eventually it will lean to a dictatorial system."

Just like how the Old Empire was like that in the past.

Lux felt like he was told such thing.

Dist took out a small box from the locked drawer and put it on the table, then he stood up from the reception room's sofa.

Lux was about to stand up following him, but he gestured with his hand to stop him while entering into a reference room deeper inside.

"You are resolved right? The resolve to step into the realm of politics even if you have to brave danger. Then just go. I cannot cooperate with you."

"Lord Dist....."

When Dist entered into the reference room, the door closed with a bang.

Lux was left alone inside the reception room.

"....."

He intentionally put a small box in front of him and then left his seat. The current Lux wasn't so slow that he didn't understand Dist's intention.

Personally, as one of the Four Great Nobles and in order to fulfill his duty to Nulph, he was unable to sell him out.

But, as someone who was worried about the direction the New Kingdom itself was going, he left behind a clue for Lux.

In other words, from here on if he got involved it would be at his own risk.

No matter what would happen, it would be an action that Lux caused by his own decision.

Lux asked for a meeting with Lord Dist to consult him, and while he was letting his guard down Lux secretly took a peek at the information that he had.

This was Dist telling him that was how he was going to act.

"—Thank you, very much."

He erased the indecision that was born in his chest and opened the box.

If he was going to stop here, then from the beginning he wouldn't sneak into the building where Sieg was staying.

Inside the small box, there was the document regarding the territory the Four Great Nobles possessed.

After Lux found the location of Sieg's villa, he wrote it in a memo and got out of the government building.

It was only past 8 o'clock in the morning, but he didn't have much time considering that he had to welcome the noble visitors of other countries in the castle in the afternoon.

Besides unlike late at night, if he piloted a Drag-Ride in the middle of the day someone would witness it.

In that case, rather than Philuffy, it might be better to borrow her strength here.

"—Yoruka. Is it alright right now?"

"Yes. At present there is no strange presence in the surrounding."

After taking some distance from the building where Dist was staying, Lux called Yoruka's name. At the same time her voice came from her hiding place.

Kirihime Yoruka.

She herself was still under the curse of the world revision, but he asked her to follow him until this far.

If it was with the special equipment type Divine Drag-Ride Yato no Kami that Yoruka possessed, it was possible to act even in the middle of the day without standing out by using the camouflage function.

He asked her to stand on guard against the surroundings while heading towards the private property of Sieg in the capital.

Lux's aim was the private warehouse near a forest that was managed by Sieg's subordinate.

Originally it wasn't a Drag-Ride hangar, but there was case when Drag-Rides were placed there in few numbers.

Therefore Lux thought that it was ideal to hide his private soldier's Drag-Rides.

Yoruka distracted the guards and leaped to enter inside while still carrying Lux under Yato no Kami's camouflage.

He easily found the target a few minutes after searching inside the empty warehouse.

"—!"

As he thought.

Inside where countless containers were placed, he found several Drakes.

"There is no mistake. The Drake of that Sword Device is this one, Aruji-sama."

".....Yes."

Lux nodded at the words of Yoruka who muttered while being on guard to the surrounding area using radar.

In a state of the Drag-Ride existing in a certain distance, the contract would be dissolved when it confirmed that its owner died.

Thus, Lux tried to contract with it and restarted it.

He immediately wore the armor and replayed the image recording function of the special equipment type.

"As I thought, this is—"

Lux gasped seeing the played scene.

The details of the incident that was grasped by the Old Empire faction.

"There is, no other way, then to ask directly....."

Lux formed a plan in order to expose the full picture of this fictive world.

Part 3

"Fuu....."

Lux finished his task in the royal castle and sighed in a stone corridor.

At noon of the parade's second day. Lux headed to the royal castle just like the two previous loops and greeted the noble visitors from various countries at the castle gate, including the Seven Dragon Paladins.

As expected, Aeryl, Magialca, and Singlen weren't present.

The other people acted like they were there, but Lux's eyes couldn't perceive their existence.

In other words, they were dead or have been captured somewhere.

There were such possibilities, but most likely it was the former.

Just, he was thinking that perhaps Aeryl was still alive, although that conjecture also included his wishful thinking.

(.....Right now I'm getting near to the truth.)

The mastermind controlled Avalon and eliminated all the opponents who were inconvenient for themselves. He would thrust the proof before them and question them to stop this incident.

Depending on the situation, he might have to face Fugil.

(Can I win? With my current fatigued body, against that Fugil—)

The strongest Drag-Knight who faced all the members of the Seven Dragon Paladins except Lux and won.

Did a way to defeat that man exist?

"Oi Lux. What are you doing being absentminded there?"

At the corridor in the first floor of the castle, while he was sitting on a sofa there, a familiar blonde side tail fluttered.

The princess who employed Lux as a knight, Lizsharte was in front of him when he noticed.

"Ahaha. I'm sorry Lisha-sama. I'm a bit tired from the greetings."

"You troubling guy, getting tired from just this much. Do you realize now the routine hardship of a princess like me?"

'Fufun' Lisha's figure that was folding her arms boastfully and puffing up her chest was charming.

Lux was also lured by that and smiled wryly, but in actuality he was beaten up because there were too many things that he had to consider.

The looping parade and the false reality.

How much was true and who was alive.

What if the mastermind who seemed to be the main cause was an important person just as Lux predicted?

If he was forced to fight such an existence, what would happen to the New Kingdom after this?

Fugil and Sacred Eclipse—in the end what kind of shape and involvement did they have in this world?

His feeling was complicated like five years ago when he challenged the Old Empire. It was worrying Lux's mind.

And then, if he exposed the evil deed of the mastermind and blamed them, in the end Lux might be treated as a traitor and even Airi and everyone in Syvalles might also get implicated.

(Is it okay for a knight of the New Kingdom like me to make such a decision.....)

".....Lux. Oi Lux!"

"Tsu.....!? Yes!"

Lux returned to his senses from Lisha's voice and he replied in a hurry.

Lisha was entangling the fingers of both her hands with each other looking somewhat fretful while making a suggestion to him.

"There is still a bit more time until the party starts..... Do you want to stroll inside the castle with me for a bit? There is something, I want to talk with

you.....for a bit."

"—I understand. Please allow me to accompany you."

"Nn."

In his plan, the negotiation with the mastermind would be after the party ended, so he had some leeway with the time right now.

Lisha's expression turned bright when he replied like that after hesitating slightly.

The short time before the battle that wouldn't be known by anyone. Lux decided to spend it with the princess Lisha.

Part 4

First floor inside the castle—the great dining hall.

Lisha first guided Lux to that place where countless long tables were lined up.

"Oi cook. Prepare some extraordinary snack. It's going to be a portion for me the princess and her knight after all."

"Yes yes. I get it, Lisha-sama."

The castle's head chef was a past middle-aged woman with big build. She gave a really gentle impression.

Lisha's tone with her was really casual, Lux wondered if she had gotten along well with the people inside the castle without him noticing.

"The skill of the head chef here is amazing. In the era of the Old Empire, just because she is a woman she was only allowed to do the servant work, but five years ago she was hired here because of her cooking skill."

"Is that so?"

Lux only heard the explanation from Lisha casually and a confection was placed in front of him.

Inside the freshly baked tart that was giving off the aroma of butter, it was filled with custard cream and candied apple slices inside.

Beside it there was whipped cream and apple tea using the extract from apple's skin accompanying the dish.

"How is it Lux, the taste?"

".....!? It's delicious! Very much so!"

The dough crumbled with crispy texture inside his mouth each time he chewed, the sweet taste of the cream became a feeling of happiness that filled the heart.

Lux too was someone with a refined palate, but this confection was an equal match with those that Philuffy made.

"The princess was really noisy in these two weeks. Because Lux-dono was really a great help for her in Cross Field, she high-spiritedly said that this time she wanted to give you a tour inside the castle. This dish too is something that she had consulted with me since quite some time ago."

Lisha's cheeks burned red the instant the female cook said that.

"DAaAAH! I told you not to tell him that already before right!? This is an abuse of confidentiality!"

"Oops, is that so. Really sorry, princess."

The face of the woman who said that with a laugh was cheerful.

"Thank you very much, Lisha-sama."

Surely the middle-aged woman said that intentionally.

Thanks to that he realized Lisha's consideration for him and felt happy.

"That's, it because I forgot my wallet on our first date. Even I want to at least show you my dignity as a princess by treating you, that's all."

Lisha felt happy at Lux's thanks while pretending that it wasn't a big deal. Lux smiled wryly at that.

After finishing the supreme snack, the tension of his tensed nerves relaxed.

"The, then, we are going to walk around inside the castle to help with digesting the food too. There is still two more hours until the party!"

".....Yes. Please take care of me."

After thinking for a bit, Lux decided to still go along with Lisha's tour.

Because he wanted to look at the situation inside the castle—especially the situation of Prime Minister Nulph and Queen Raffi while this loop was going on.

"Yosh, next is the banquet hall, let's go!"

Next, Lisha showed him around the first floor further.

The banquet hall with its luxurious decorations.

The barn and chapel inside the castle grounds.

Places like the beautiful courtyard that was well tended, even Lux knew them

from the era of the Old Empire.

At that time he didn't have many chances entering the castle, but he was relatively familiar with the area around here.

"Oo, princess. You are in a good mood with the knight-dono accompanying you."

"You were magnificent in the parade. Please support her majesty the queen from here on too."

While moving to here and there, the servants and guards working inside the castle were greeting Lux and Lisha with a smile.

Lux casually compared his perception with Lisha, but it seemed that the number of people inside the castle wasn't particularly decreasing.

Currently there was no human that Lux couldn't see but could be seen by Lisha who was under the perception curse from the world revision.

In other words, the user of Avalon wasn't indiscriminate. As expected they only targeted existences that had the possibility of threatening themselves and dealt with them without anyone knowing. It wouldn't be wrong to consider it like that.

And also how Fugil and Avalon's Automata Arshalia participated and were lending their assistance to the mastermind.

—But, with that in mind, a single question surfaced.

(Even though Aeryl isn't here, she was enrolling into the Academy since before the parade, what does that mean?)

It wasn't like he couldn't understand it as a setting that the mastermind wished for.

Because in order to smoke out the New Kingdom's enemy at the parade, it was necessary that on the surface they did their best to decrease any complications with other countries and made the domestic political situation one where it was easy to move.

In that case, it might be possible that they were simply not here right now while they were alive somewhere.

It was a slight hope.

Or rather it was on a level that was nothing more than a delusion, but it might be possible.

—When such thinking was crossing his mind, Lux's back was lightly tapped.

"Oi Lux. Are you that bored? Then how about I brought you to the nap room of the soldiers?"

The pondering Lux was stared fixedly by Lisha who was puffing up her cheeks.

"N, no, that's not it..... For some reason I'm remembering about the Old Empire."

"I see..... Various things also happened in your past huh."

Lisha's expression changed into a deeply emotional one.

In contrast with the usual Lisha who was lively and full of confidence, now she looked transient with a trace of gloominess—

"Recently I'm also seeing a dream..... The dream of before and after the revolution five years ago happened."

"The time, of the revolution?"

For a moment Lux was surprised thinking whether Lisha too had noticed the world revision.

But, that wasn't it.

"In the past, do you remember when I talked about my little sister? For some reason, that girl's figure comes to my mind right now."

Like that for a little while Lisha told Lux about her little sister reminiscently.

Her name was Almatea, she was a quiet girl but possessed a strong heart.

She was really attached both to her father Count Atismata and also to Lisha. She was a bright girl who possessed awareness and pride as a noble strongly.

"....."

This was the second time Lux heard Lisha talking about that little sister.

But, Lux also still remembered when she talked about it for the first time.

If he remembered correctly, it seemed her whereabouts became unknown during the confusion of the revolution.

In reality she was thought to be dead.

When Count Atismata was killed with even his residence and hideout attacked, the soldiers of the Old Empire—

"Surely that girl won't forgive me if she saw me right now. I betrayed father to keep my own life, on top of that I ascended to the seat of the princess of the New Kingdom, the likes of me is just—"

Lisha's eyes shook with regret, sadness, and anxiety. Her body was trembling in shivers.

Seeing that Lux reflexively embraced Lisha's body.

"Lu, x.....?"

Her face that had a trace of childishness remaining in it was shocked.

Her crimson eyes opened wide in surprise and blush colored her cheeks.

"It's fine. I swear I'll protect you Lisha-sama."

"Ah, uh....."

The lovable princess shyly averted her gaze, however, she put her strength into her arms that hugged him back.

Some kind of emotion welled up from the bottom of his body, but the next moment, *bump* a sound echoed from the corridor.

"—!?"

Lux and Lisha who returned to their senses in surprise separated from each other while watching the surrounding.

That was dangerous.

Unthinkingly they were almost going to do something impulsively if they stayed like that.

But, it seemed the sound was just their imagination in the end.

(No but, a faint presence was—)

Even though Lux tilted his head in puzzlement, in the end he didn't notice anything.



"Cheh..... The, then, let's go to the next place already."

Seeing Lisha puffing up her cheeks in dissatisfaction, Lux also smiled wryly while nodding.

.

They headed towards the Drag-Ride hangar as the last place Lisha showed him around.

"Oo, isn't this the princess. Welcome!"

"The Drag-Rides' maintenance is perfect. Do you want to give it a test run? Or perhaps adjustment?"

As soon as Lisha entered into the hangar's workshop, from the elderly until the young apprentice, a great number of engineers called out to her.

From there it could be guessed where Lisha was focusing her activity in these two weeks.

In respond Lisha waved her hand looking somewhat proud while taking Lux to look around.

"It's better to not use that weapon with Drake. The output will drop and the precious abilities of a special equipment type will be hard to use. Ah, it's the reverse with that one. Thickening the armor will be—"

It wasn't like Lux wasn't feeling that Lisha seemed to be mistaken somehow in how to act as the princess of a country, but his face broke into a smile seeing the scene that was really like Lisha.

"Wha, what are you grinning at!? Is it that strange seeing me giving guidance like this? It can't be helped..... These guys asked me to teach them."

Lisha made an awkward face. Perhaps Lisha herself also had the thought that this wasn't really normal as a princess.

But, Lux shook his head slightly and smiled softly at Lisha.

"No, I'm happy seeing Lisha-sama is recognized by the people of the castle."

"—!?"

In that instant her face blushed red as though she was boiling up.

".....That's, it's. It's because I showed my face here and there."

After paralyzed for a while, Lisha started speaking with a small voice.

"These two weeks, I showed my face at various places and tried helping out. What is everyone thinking about the New Kingdom, what do they want to do after this. I thought that first I have to try listening from the nearby people."

Lisha spoke brusquely like that, but Lux was deeply moved in his heart.

Lisha who harbored dissatisfaction to her own status was trying to come into contact with the people inside the castle as a princess. It left a deep impression on him.

"That's splendid Lisha-sama. You were going that far while being away from me."

".....What are you saying, in the first place it was because of your fault."

"Yes?"

Lisha muttered while averting her gaze with a troubled look. Lux tilted his head in puzzlement.

"Since the day of revolution five years ago, even with your status as a criminal and while you were getting disparaged as the Chore Prince, you faced everyone and became their strength. And then in practice you even got close with anyone anywhere isn't it?"

"....."

Lux was taken aback by those words and held his breath.

It wasn't because of Lisha's act, Lux noticed the reason why she was starting to do something like this.

"That's right. I followed your example and tried calling out from my own initiative. No matter what my personal feeling is, I cannot keep averting my eyes from myself forever. The battle has also calmed down at present, so I've to get along with the people in the castle and learn to get involved with the national politics."

"_____"

Mysteriously Lux couldn't make any word.

He even forgot the ghastly incident of world revision that was in his mind until now.

Something touched his heartstrings and he looked stupefied in a daze.

Lux was unable to immediately notice that it was what people called being deeply emotional.

"Oi. Don't stay quiet, say something. Even though it look like this, even I am at my limit here. It's troubling if you ignored me here!?"

Lisha flapped around her hands looking quite flustered.

Lux immediately took those hands and grasped tightly.

"Wai-!? Wha, what's wrong Lux!?"

"No—I'm a bit deeply moved, that I cannot really find the right words."

That was Lux's true feeling.

Lisha who was unable to accustom herself with her position as the New Kingdom's princess was groping for the way to live as a princess in her own way.

She was making Lux's way of life as a model to be her clue in her effort.

In other words, she was watching Lux's way of life in this one year and respected it more than anyone.

In the era of the Old Empire, other than Fugil no one else recognized his way of life.

He was the seventh prince who was the farthest from the imperial succession right. Just because he was the grandson of the educator who remonstrated the emperor, no matter what he proclaimed it wouldn't have any effect.

But, this lovable and proud girl in front of him didn't only treasure her own subordinate, she was also trying to learn from them.

The figure of the ideal king that Lux wished for but was unable to become in the end was in front of him.

Right now it was nothing more than an immature bud, but if it kept growing like this then it would surely bloom into a beautiful flower.

"Thank you so much, Lisha-sama."

"Wha, what's with you so suddenly. It's just something that I did for my own sake, well but, if you are praising me—"

Lisha's vividly crimson eyes reflected Lux's smiling face.

A warm feeling that couldn't be turned into words filled her chest, it was then—

"Hyuu hyuu! You two there, how passionate!"

"Oh ho, isn't it still too early for the marriage parade?"

"Wai-!? Shut up you guys! It's finally the good scene you know!? I'm going to drive out you all!"

Lisha said something that didn't suit a splendid princess in reaction to the engineers' jeering.

Lured by that Lux smiled wryly and left the hangar together with her.

"Haa..... Those guys are really troublesome. They don't know how to treat a girl my age. Or rather, I'm the princess you know!?"

"That's just how close they have become with you, Lisha-sama."

Something like the hangar's engineers casually exchanging words with royalty would be impossible in the era of the Old Empire.

In short that was just how close Lisha was with them.

But, regardless of the praise, this small princess looked dissatisfied.

"Even though it finally became a good atmosphere..... well fine. It will be the time for the party soon."

"You're right. In the end I was unable to meet with her majesty queen Raffi, but is that alright? Recently it looks like she is really tired—"

Lux who knew about Queen Raffi's safety intentionally said that because Lisha didn't notice the loop due to the world revision, so he matched his story with that premise.

Actually, on the last day of the first loop Raffi looked bright, but he was

concerned.

However very unexpectedly the expression of Lisha who heard his question turned bright.

"No worry Lux. Her majesty—Haha-ue is alright. She is already energetic now, after all we will support her from now on too."

Lisha clenched her small fist and spoke confidently.

"That, can you keep this quiet? It's about Haha-ue, you see—"

They headed to the end of an empty corridor, and the Lisha checked their surrounding.

It seemed it was a talk that she didn't want other people to hear.

"During these two weeks, I asked Haha-ue to tell me. About the chauvinism tendency during the Old Empire era—. Because of that, Haha-ue went through very hard experiences since her childhood....."

"....."

A dark shadow suddenly loomed on the expression of Lisha who was saying that.

In contrast to her father, the great man Count Atismata, Queen Raffi had a hard time in her childhood.

Unlike her capable and noble elder brother, because she was a woman others didn't think that she was worth anything. She was made light of within the estate.

And then, one day she contracted a serious disease that caused her to receive the verdict that her body was unable to bear a child already in her young age.

"Such—thing"

Lux's expression became clouded from that tragic story.

Lux who knew in detail about the tendency of the nobles at that era understood the even harsher hell that was waiting for Raffi in addition to her pain from losing a part of her function as a woman.

It went without saying that woman were basically treated with contempt in

the era of the Old Empire, but as a noble lady, they only had one recognized value, which was as a tool of political marriage.

Salvation would finally come to them by accomplishing the task of giving birth to the eldest son who would become the house's successor.

At that time, even being unable to give birth to a boy was already enough for the label of useless to be branded on a woman. And yet, Queen Raffi at that time became unable to even give birth to a child. It wasn't difficult to imagine what kind of treatment she was given then.

She surely became a target of scorn who was continuously being rebuked from her family and her surroundings, that even alive her existence had no worth.

The parents of the distinguished family who was close with her family at that time naturally heard about her condition. They one-sidedly annulled her engagement.

Since then, Queen Raffi lost all hope and spent a life like a half-dead person.

After that, she met a new lover who accepted such her and she devoted her everything to him, but that person actually had a different objective and only tricked her.

"_____"

Lux who heard that couldn't make any sound.

Queen Raffi was respected as the little sister of the great man Count Atismata who accomplished the revolution, but he didn't know that she had such a harsh life.

The era and the ideology.

By birth she was dropped into an environment that she couldn't overturn by her own will. She lived in a misfortune where not a single good opportunity came to her. In a sense her suffering might be greater than Lux and Lisha.

"I felt embarrassed of myself. I shrunk back from being a princess just from getting taken hostage by the enemy for a few months."

Lisha suddenly made a serious expression and lowered her eyebrows

sorrowfully.

"Compared to the life that Haha-ue went through..... She pushed down her own suffering, even so she thought of the New Kingdom and endured for the sake of the people. It's the same like our deathly battle against the Abyss and the Lords.That's why!"

Saying that Lisha strongly clenched her fist and lifted it in front of Lux.

"Let's help her together Lux. Let us both become Haha-ue's strength. That person too is happy with the current me. She told me that if she has a body that can give birth to a child, she would want a child like me."

Lisha muttered that with a quite embarrassed look.

"....."

Lisha who lost her mother when she was little and got abandoned by her father, and Queen Raffi who was unable to give birth to a child in the first place.

Surely the two of them formed a bond that surpassed that of a relative by sharing the pain of their pasts with each other.

Believing that was exactly what was necessary to prop up the New Kingdom from here on—

"Yes! I too will become your strength without fail, Lisha-sama."

Lux grasped her hand and tightened his hold.

Zeal and spirit that was unthinkable from her smallness was transmitted to him through her hand's temperature.

"Ah, come to think of it Prime Minister Nulph is—"

After some time, Lux let go of her hand and suddenly recalled something. He casually spoke it out.

"Hm? Do you have a business with that man? He should be participating in the party just as planned though—"

".....No, nothing particular."

Lux smoothly warded off Lisha's question.

Actually, throughout Lisha's tour of the castle, when they passed Prime Minister Nulph by, both Lux and Lisha were able to see him normally.

Therefore at present it appeared that he didn't notice his trap— Sania and Ignid who were manipulated by the parasite type Abyss had been crushed by Lux.

And then, he also didn't see any Automata inside the castle.

(As I thought, perhaps I shouldn't investigate until the party is over.....)

In case that the mastermind's identity was just as Lux thought, he didn't know how they would move. So he could only do that.

"Lux. What are you doing? The party is starting already."

".....Yes, Lisha-sama."

Lux nodded at Lisha's urging and slowly headed towards the reception hall.

On the other hand, two people were silently conversing in the darkness of a hidden path inside the castle.

Part 5

Inside the castle of the new kingdom.

There was a hidden room inside this castle that even the people working there didn't know about.

It was created at the era of the old empire. It was a space that possessed the history of getting used as escape route, place for secret talk, and also for other things like imprisonment or torture.

This place where even people to maintain it didn't exist anymore was known by that person by accident.

"Then, someone who notice the world revision appear as expected?"

One of the two people there.

A man wearing a black luxurious mantle with eye glint that was like a beast, Fugil responded to the question of his master.

"About that, even I am unable to grasp their existence. At the present time, it's simply that the right of counterattack arrived to you who is chosen by Sacred Eclipse. Avalon's power of creation—it's your freedom to decide how you will use it."

"....."

"Till the end I will give only a little help for that. By no means I'm giving you my full cooperation. I will not be responsible of your deed and everything that resulted from that."

Fugil told that toward his master in front of him with a firm tone.

In respond the silhouette hesitated only for a bit before they made a clear decision.

"I see, then I will arrange it as planned. Everything is by your will."

Fugil told that toward his new master and bowed courteously.

And then the hands of the clock started moving.

Part 6

"At this occasion all of you have done admirably delivering victory in this great war for our side. If any single one from all the countries here was missing, surely we wouldn't be able to grasp the future. Let's begin the meager banquet of victory now!"

After the greeting of Queen Raffi, Prime Minister Nulph concluded like that and the party began.

The representatives and Seven Dragon Paladins from each country should be completely present in this place, but at present Aeryl, Magialka, and Singlen weren't here.

Also, even Lux at his present state was able to perceive Prime Minister Nulph. That meant that he was alive at the present without a doubt.

And then the other people except Lux and Philuffy seemed to perceive that everyone was present without anyone missing just as he expected. There Lux tried forming a certain hypothesis.

(This situation—the curse of perception by Ouroboros, how will it work from here on?)

Aeryl once similarly made use of a portion of Ruin's power to manipulate perception so she could become Coral.

However Aeryl was able to do that because she was connected to Ruin due to Baptism and she continued to use that power.

Furthermore even with that power Aeryl had to be personally present in place to act her part. From there it could be assumed that it was a weak power of perception manipulation.

In contrast Ouroboros had powerful manipulation perception in wide range.

Right now the curse was limited to while the parade was going on so it wasn't that complicated, but the more time passed and the more people got involved with each other, it should create a lot of uncertain point.

And then when someone noticed those inconsistencies, their brain would create another lie to complement it.

It was a terrific power that came from the resonance of Avalon and the Ruins—was how it looked like, but there should be some kind of weak point.

"....."

Lux sent a glance at a corner of the party venue. There he could see the figure of Philuffy and Relie.

The key to break the puzzle existed in the past memory of Lux himself.

Five years ago, Philuffy who he thought died from the human experiment was resurrected later by Sacred Eclipse's power, that was how she was alive even now.

But, if she really died at that time, wouldn't she not exist at this place right now?

Because, if the perception manipulation right now would continue for eternity, Count Atismata who accomplished the revolution at that time would surely be alive even now.

Even if he didn't exist in the throne, it would be fine if he was simply kept alive in everyone's perception.

(In other words, this large scale perception manipulation—the revision of the world cannot continue for that long.)

If lies were painted over with lies, although it would become a temporary patch up, in the end many inconsistencies would occur and it would crumble.

For the owner of Avalon, this was a period of course correction to remove several fatal problems and put themselves in an advantageous position.

In that case, after this loop was cancelled, would the existence of Magialca, Singlen, and Aeryl who were here right now get corrected into the fact that they died?

But, when Lux hypothesized that, a single question was born.

(No wait. Why did before the parade Aeryl was wearing the Academy's

uniform at first? Even though she should be treated as dead after all in the end using perception revision, for what was it—)

The instant Lux thought that, he gasped.

Because he noticed the intention of the mastermind who caused this loop.

Sania and Ignid were modified alive by the Automatas and they were turned into disposable tools.

Because there was no need to keep them alive.

If by any chance the mastermind planned to make use of Aeryl from here on too by manipulating her using the power of Avalon, it was better for her to go around various countries in rotation.

(I see, so that's it.....!)

In other words, the possibility that Aeryl hadn't died yet was high.

She was being captured with the brainwashing of deep perception manipulation applied on her. They could just release her later after she was remodeled as a convenient pawn for the new kingdom.

But, if that was the case there was no time.

Thinking that two weeks had passed since the battle in the abandoned capital Guernica, Aeryl wasn't here might mean that she was in the middle of brainwashing.

"Phi-chan. I have a request, is it okay?"

".....Nn."

Lux went around the room as the center of the talking topic while whispering into Philuffy's ear.

Seen from the side her expression was blank like usual, but she should be listening properly.

"Oi, prince-sama. What are you doing looking dazed like that huh? Aeryl is lonely here."

"Ahaha, sorry Greifer."

Lux couldn't see Aeryl's figure anymore, but he was skillfully pretending to match his talk with his comrades who didn't notice the reality.

If the mastermind was among the people here, Lux couldn't let them know that he had noticed the loop at this point of time.

The party time with the representatives of each country passed.

And then Lux didn't overlook Prime Minister Nulph quietly disappearing in the middle of it.

.

Part 7

".....What's going on? Why aren't they coming? The arranged time has passed a long time ago—"

Prime Minister Nulph who left his seat passed through the underground hidden corridor inside the castle and stamped his feet in irritation inside a dreary box shaped warehouse.

This place was a hidden Drag-Ride hangar facility inside the new kingdom.

The hidden passage for escaping and evacuation which was created at the era of the old empire was restructured into a hangar.

Right now it wasn't used anymore. Prime Minister Nulph was in that forgotten place.

He was biting his nail in irritation while being accompanied by two Drag-Knights who seemed to be his guards.

"—My apologies but, they won't be coming."

"What?"

Inside the musty hangar that was illuminated by several torches in iron baskets, Lux in his uniform slipped out of the darkness and called out to him.

"Sania and Ignid. I removed the trap that you laid out."

"-.....!? Lux Arcadia!? You—why are you here!?"

The complexion of Prime Minister Nulph changed hearing the words that Lux said.

The air of intellectual impression he gave to other people vanished. Now he was emitting a sharp killing intent.

".....You murdered Waybra and Sieg Kreutzer. I have confirmed the image recording of the stolen Drake."

What was recorded there was Prime Minister Nulph's transaction with Dragon Marauder. He sold the information of new kingdom in order to fatten

his own purse.

Because that dodgy dealing was grasped by Waybra of the old empire faction, Prime Minister Nulph was targeted as a part of the plan to bring down the queen from the throne.

Like that not only Nulph would lose his position as prime minister, he would be executed too.

Therefore he used the power of Avalon to manipulate the situation.

"Can you speak to me honestly? About Avalon—"

"Wro, wrong! That kind of recording is a fake! There I no way I would do anything like that! I don't know anything about them! Someone is trying to frame me—"

"Then, why is it you never met the gaze of the people who aren't here in this parade?"

"——"

In reaction to Lux's question, a slight forbidding look surfaced on Prime Minister Nulph's face and he fell silent.

Lux exposed that he wasn't affected by Avalon's perception manipulation.

By telling that, Nulph noticed that he was unable to deceive him anymore.

"I see, if you know about that then we can make this brief. But, Lux Arcadia. Can't you keep this matter a secret?"

Nulph suddenly let go of his tension and spoke with a calm tone.

"This I a necessary step in order to rally up the new kingdom. The burden to Queen Raffi is already too heavy. The phase where it's possible for her to simply cling on the prestige of Count Atismata has passed."

Nulph talked gracefully as though in a performance.

His voice was clear and resounded well.

On the other hand, that voice was hoarse as though it was oozing resignation.

In this chance he was trying to reel in the authority over new kingdom that

was shaken and crumbling in the foundation toward himself.

"Why is her majesty not good? If all of us support her, then no matter what happened—"

"Do you really think that's the case?"

Nulph snickered at the question that Lux asked him with a straightforward gaze and he averted his eyes.

And then he began to walk with clicking footsteps on the floor of the Drag-Ride hangar that was illuminated by the flame of the torches.

"It's impossible, Lux Arcadia. At the beginning I didn't intend to bring down her majesty. But it's impossible for her. Her very nature is decisively not suited for conflict."

That was the opinion of the man who had actually watched the thinking of Queen Raffi from the side throughout this one year of conflict.

"Drawing out advantageous terms in negotiation and obtain benefit. Hiding your own failure and then acting as though you are advancing in the right path. Those are necessary trait for the people of authority, and she cannot do that. In that case, what would happen? She is full of opening to be attacked by the surrounding. By other statesmen, rebels, the selfish people and group of the country. She is toyed around by such fellows, as the result it caused the nation's power to be exhausted."

"Such thing is—"

'Not true.'

Lux couldn't assert that definitively.

Right now the whole country was in high spirit from the victory against the Lords, but before that the new kingdom was left behind when dealing with various thing, there were also a lot of dissatisfaction and the voices that were criticizing the queen were great in number.

But that was also the fault of unexpected situation that was unluckily occurring continuously.

By no mean it was because Queen Raffi was unsuited or lacking in effort.

"There is even those who start to say that perhaps the way of the old empire is the right one if it's like this. Her majesty the queen is unfortunate, but people's impression is hard to be changed."

"That's why, you are saying to abandon her?"

"I'm going to inherit her majesty's will. That's what I want to say."

"That's a lie."

The reasoning spoken by Prime Minister Nulph indeed sounded convincing, but Lux immediately cut it down.

"If you are going to inherit her majesty's will, then it's fine to borrow Count Atismata's prestige just like until now. If you have calculation like what you are just saying, then that what you should have done. In short—you should have another different objective. Am I wrong?"

"....."

Nulph's expression didn't change.

But, looking at how he pressed his young and virile lips together, Lux judged that his assumption was correct.

"The blood of the imperial family cannot be contested, is it. As expected."

Prime Minister Nulph suddenly leaked out a small sigh and showed a smile.

"I was lost whether to say this or not but, her majesty the queen has a fatal weakness. The new kingdom will be faced with a predicament if it's not be dealt with right now. Therefore—.....u, goh!"

Nulph groaned the moment was about to say something.

His clear eyes clouded like mud, while his body color changed.

The skin of his whole body was dyed jet black and his body tissue transformed as though his body was turned inside out.

"This is! This symptom—"

He had recollection of it.

Last night, it was the symptom that happened to Sania and Ignid.

No, in addition to that there was something more. Nocturnal transformation due to injection of Elixir was also starting at the same time.

The body surface was covered with pitch black color, while both his eyes were tinged with crimson light.

"Prime Minister Nulph. Let's kill him!"

"He is the hero who saved the new kingdom, but we can only make him vanish now that this truth become known!"

The two girl guards standing beside Nulph pulled out their Sword Device at the same time.

The two didn't look perturbed as though they understood Nulph's condition—.

(What is this out of place feeling.....?)

A slight doubt was born inside Lux.

The situation moved without even any time to think deeply of it.

"—Come, the winged dragon of crest that symbolized power. Obey my sword and soar, Wyvern!"

"—Come, the dragon that symbolized immortality. Turn into the chaining fang of earth, Wyrn!"

"Kuh.....!"

Lux who saw that also reacted quickly and pulled out his own Sword Device.

"—Connect – On!"

The two guards summoned two Drag-Ride along with the pass code and quickly wore them.

In respond Lux summoned Wyvern using mind control operation without chanting pass code.

The deployment of his armored arm barely made it in time and he blocked the two's attack using his Blade.

Why didn't Lux summoned the Divine Drag-Ride Bahamut?

The reason was because of the fatigue of his body that he felt at the previous fight.

The cause was unknown, but the current Lux wasn't in a state that could endure the energy consumption of Divine Drag-Ride.

Therefore he selected the general purpose type Wyvern instead of Bahamut that put a large burden on him.

"Now! Nulph-sama!"

"Please use the power of Avalon while we are buying time!"

(.....!? This feeling, don't tell me)

The two guards of Prime Minister Nulph used their respective weapon powerfully to fight back.

But, because their skill was only at the level of average Drag-Knight, they weren't a match against Lux and their armor was crushed in the blink of eye.

"Guh.....!?"

"Nulph-sama! Please run!"

The two guards who now were only in their pilot suit tumbled down on the floor while squeezing out their voice.

Lux turned his gaze toward the hangar's exit to not let Nulph get away. It was then a strange shape appeared before him.

"—*There is no need for that, both of you.*"

DOGUN-!

A terrific shockwave from a roar echoed inside the hidden Drag-Ride hangar.

At the same time the torches inside the room were blown off and the room was enveloped in darkness.

"Wha.....!"

Right after that, an unexpectedly powerful shockwave attacked. Lux endured it with his barrier while focusing his sight.

But, a terribly powerful blow attacked from the empty darkness where his

eyes couldn't see anything.

"Gu, a.....-!?"

Lux reflexively used his Blade as shield and avoided the attack from hitting him directly.

But, the attack with brutal weight behind it that was like a battering ram became an impact that pierced through his armor and shook his brain vertically.

(Calm down.....! Not yet, until my eyes.....get used to this!)

The instant he intersected with the opponent, he could slightly see the silhouette of Nulph wearing EX Drake.

He was turned into Nocturnal due to Elixir and his skin surface turned pitch black.

—But, that wasn't all.

His flesh assimilated with the Drag-Ride itself.

"What, this appearance.....!?"

"You have, reached the truth. There is no way, you can be allowed to leave this place alive!"

A thick killing intent was released toward Lux along with a distorted and cloudy inhuman voice.

"Kuh, there!-!?"

Lux evaded the barrage of Breath Gun that Nulph fired while trying to counterattack, but his hand stopped.

Ahead where he was going to glide there was a Drag-Ride that was placed in the hangar beforehand. He couldn't see it and it got on his way.

(So, that's how it is.....)

When his eyes got slightly used to the darkness, he noticed the trap of this disposable hangar.

Because countless decayed and disposable Drag-Rides were lined up, they became obstacles that hindered his flying.

In other words, EX Drake that could use radar and night vision was overwhelmingly superior here.

"Gugi! GAAaAAAAAAA.....!"

Prime Minister Nulph who had become one with the machine roared and swung his iron hammer with all his might.

The camouflage possessed by the special equipment type would greatly drop in performance when its energy was split for attacking, but it displayed enough effectiveness when it was used in darkness like this.

"Die! Die! DIEEEEEEE! Those who got in the way of my supremacy, diee-!"

Nulph came swinging his iron hammer while shrieking with a broken voice that was accompanied with killing intent.

".....Kuh!?"

The power of the terrific blow that rivaled even Ragnarok reached Lux even when it was blocked by his sword and barrier.

Furthermore the mysterious fatigue and his body's bad shape made him unable to counterattack properly.

—But, even while Lux was being cornered into a disadvantage, he still dodged all the attacks from landing directly.

A few minutes after that.

Nulph was unable to overcome Lux regardless of the overwhelming disadvantage. He finally started to notice that something was strange.

"Why.....! How are you, blocking the attacks that are using camouflage in this darkness!?"

There was no doubt that Prime Minister Nulph used the power of Avalon to obtain great power.

But, he was inferior in skill even compared to third class Drag-Knight. His level was different from Lux.

First if Lux moved until near the corner of the hangar and put the wall behind him, the angle from where the opponent's attack was coming could be limited.

And then after Nulph's EX Drake swung the iron hammer it wielded, it wouldn't be able to attack from the same angle consecutively.

In addition the nature of that weapon made it unsuited for repeated attack with rapid movement.

And above all else, while Lux was doing his chore livelihood, at the same time he also piled up experience of continuously polishing his defensive skill in the tournament.

The opponent's breathing and habit.

Something like brute force attack that wasn't accompanied by training to eliminate those signs could be seen through even inside this darkness.

A total of five minutes passed since the battle started.

Lux finished forming the scenario toward victory in that short time.

"—Haah!"

Lux who finally saw through the attacking timing perfectly matched his movement with the opponent's downswing and swung his Scale Blade.

He intercepted the starting point of the opponent's attack a moment ahead which resulted in a counter that wholly returned the attack's power back to the enemy.

It was Lux's special move that was using the special weapon Lisha made for him, a weapon that circulated the Drag-Ride's barrier toward the Blade. The attack crushed Prime Minister Nulph's iron hammer.

"*NUua.....!?*"

The impact further penetrated EX Drake's armor and made him staggered.

When the faltering Nulph leaped backward, it also gave Lux the leeway to confirm something.

(.....It's there!)

He couldn't exactly confirmed it by sight in the darkness, but Lux clearly sensed it when Prime Minister Nulph's distance was less than ten-odd ml from him.

Even though he couldn't see it, he could clearly perceive the opponent's breathing and conduct.

For some reason he felt like he could even perceive what Nulph was going to do after this.

(Is it because the Baptism I received in Avalon? This senses—)

It was surely still far below Yoruka's magic eye that could sense the presence's wavelength, even so he was able to detect the opponent's movement in a different level than before.

"—There-!"

Lux glided in the air without hesitation and slashed the darkness with the tip of his Blade. He felt a definite response and the opponent's armor was crushed.

".....*GU, GAaAAaAAAAH!*"

It wasn't the right shoulder where the Force Core was installed, but it was the armored arm right under that was severed.

Lux held back because Prime Minister Nulph who transformed into Nocturnal would die if his body was damaged too much.

Crackling sparks scattered from the destroyed armor. The EX Drake's center of gravity crumbled and it staggered.

"Haa, haa.....!"

No matter how well Lux saw through the opponent's attacks, the opponent was undoubtedly powerful.

Because Lux intentionally didn't destroy the Force Core or the flesh body directly, the damage to the flesh body should be relatively light but—.

"*Gu, ah..... Lux Arcadia, you're, wrong..... I'm.....!*"

But, Lux's consideration ended in vain.

When Lux took a torch that lied on the floor and moved it to the iron basket to make lighting, Prime Minister Nulph who returned to normal had already expired.

When he looked around further, the two girls who seemed to be his guards

had already collapsed and stopped breathing when he didn't notice.

It looked like they got hit by the stray attack from the rampaging Nulph but.....

"So it's no good..... But, is it over? With this—"

If Prime Minister Nulph who borrowed Fugil's help died, the power of Avalon wouldn't be used further than this.

The perception that was currently being manipulated would be removed and the loop wouldn't happen further than this.

With this a danger had ended.

Next if he defeated Fugil and Sacred Eclipse that seemed to grant power to Prime Minister Nulph, everything would return to normal.

"Prime Minister, Nulph....."

He couldn't solve the puzzle of what kind of negotiation happened between him and Fugil's camp, but he couldn't ask it anymore from someone who was dead.

"....."

With this the second day of the parade was over and the last day, and if nothing happened the third day would pass—a new day without the influence of world revision should begin.

There was no reaction from the guards inside the castle regardless of the intense battle just now. As expected, the perception curse was still remaining.

Lux let out a sigh and returned to the party venue.

He participated in the continuation of the party and the night grew late.

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Part 8

"—It seems the events are progressing well. Thank you very much."

Behind the scene of the victory party that was attended by the noble visitors from various countries.

There were two people, man and woman inside a hidden room in the castle.

One of them was a man with similar silver hair and grey eyes like Lux—Fugil Arcadia.

The other one possessed beautiful golden colored hair, Queen Raffi.

"If the loop is activated once more, Avalon's effect will cut off temporarily. A long time will be needed to stock up power again. Do you have the resolve to endure the wait until then?"

"Yes. Besides, you will support me right, Fugil Arcadia?"

Raffi muttered with a cynical expression that looked somehow powerless.

"I never told anyone about you since the revolution five years ago. I have also never showed any sign of recognizing you. That time five years ago when you saved me, that also wasn't a coincidence wasn't it?"

"....."

Fugil didn't answer Raffi's question.

Raffi lied down face up on the old sofa inside the room and stared to a spot on the ceiling.

She stared at the full moon that was visible from the small glass window on the ceiling.

As though to ascertain the passing of time using the shape of the moon that was changing during the repeated three days period.

Five years ago. No one else knew it but, Raffi was also saved by Fugil.

Raffi temporarily evacuated after Count Atismata died from the trap that resulted from a betrayer's information. But the army of the old empire also

marched on her location at that time.

Her kin and other family were massacred and she was about to be killed, but Fugil appeared then and saved her from the crisis.

Fugil took away Raffi right after that. After the revolution, he entrusted her to Prime Minister Nulph who was the close aide of Count Atismata.

"There was.....nothing in me. I was treated as failed product since I was little, clinging on that chauvinism society—. The moment I realized that my body cannot give birth to a child due to a disease's after-effect, I lost any place to belong."

Similarly because her body wasn't strong due to sickness too, the path to become Drag-Knight was naturally also closed to her.

Although from the beginning it was impossible for the old empire to grant Drag-Ride to woman anyway.

"....."

Raffi formed her words piece by piece looking back at her past.

Fugil simply listened quietly to her muttering.

"It was a living hell. I realized that there was no future ahead of me even if I endured. My life was over at that time when I wasn't even twenty years old."

"Why didn't you die if you knew that?"

"Fufu, even like this I have tried to die several times you know? Though if it's you who have touched many deaths in the battlefield heard about my attempts, surely you will laugh it as mere playing."

Actually Raffi had tried hanging herself, cutting her wrist, and threw herself into a swamp.

But, in the end she couldn't reach the end.

Even while she was trying to die, she chose to live and drew back.

"Why? Even though not a single good thing had happened to me until now. It was scary, painful, agonizing, bitter, sad, vexing—. In the end I couldn't die."

"....."

Raffi's monologue was vaguely oozing resignation rather than sorrow.

Fugil was listening to that without a single change in his expression.

"Surely I didn't even have the courage to die. If I die here, if it ends here. It feels like there really will be not a single meaning at all of me being born."

That was something like the obstinacy of the weak.

Unable to fight.

Unable to resist.

Continuing to escape without other people seeing any worth in her existence, even so she wished to obtain happiness someday.

"I respected my big brother, but on the other hand I also hated him. He was a man, capable, and at the same time possessed a sense of justice. He showed the will to oppose the old empire—but in the end he foisted everything to me. I wasn't strong like my big brother. That was why I was oppressed by the surrounding."

Count Atismata was a noble man. He was undoubtedly a great man.

But, Raffi herself was never saved by him.

"Like that, you met Waybra Hemt."

".....Yes, that person who was a distant relative of the emperor said that he was in a similar environment like me and loved me even when I am like this. I was happy, truly—. He was the only one being kind to me among my cold parents, relatives, family, and aristocrat acquaintances. It was like light shined on me."

"You mean—you were looking for a hero? But in reality the hand of salvation won't come to the weak. Only predator trying to devour the weak will approach."

"Yes. In reality it's exactly as you say."

Waybra Hemt stayed in their territory at that time as an inspector. But his true identity was a spy to monitor Count Atismata. Waybra called out to Raffi for the sake of that investigation.

Their time as intimate lover continued. They made a promise to leave the territory with only the two of them and quietly married in a remote village, and then—.

The day the revolution was approaching, Raffi leaked her big brother's plan to Waybra in order to let him escape.

She noticed his betrayal was when after that the soldiers arrived and slaughtered the relatives of Count Atismata who were in hiding.

"I am—a sinner. Unable to save anyone, unable to do anything, I can only be toyed by fate and sent my brother and family to death. Everyone was cold to me but,they didn't abandon me or kill me, they kept me alive, and yet"

A self-depreciating smile suddenly floated on Raffi's lips.

After that, Raffi escaped.

Betrayed by Waybra, with her big brother and whole family killed, she was in the bottom of despair and hopelessness, crawling inside the cauldron of hell.

Even when she understood that it was just a game of the hunters, even when she realized that she would be unable to escape.

She dragged her wounded weak body that was prone to sickness and ran into the forest.

She met Fugil, and Sacred Eclipse in the form of a silver haired girl.

Sacred Eclipse slaughtered all her pursuers, then she applied a slight amount of Baptism to Raffi. The revolution was over when she woke up.

After that she headed to the capital with Fugil's guidance.

Nulph recommended her to take the throne, and then—Raffi became the new kingdom's queen.

Raffi who didn't have any strength whatsoever and only brought destruction to all around her did everything in her power, as slight as it was for the sake of the new kingdom.

Until Waybra who recorded everything at that time appeared—.

And then now, she who was partly fused with Sacred Eclipse and obtained the

forbidden power looped these three days of parade and erased the hostile force.

Prime Minister Nulph yielded against the threat of Waybra and Sieg Kreutzer and chose the path of abandoning Raffi and ingratiating himself to them.

Therefore, she captured Nulph and remodeled him. To make use of him as a tool to deceive Lux who noticed the truth of this world revision.

"Are you alright? With someone like me?"

"What could you mean by that?"

Fugil asked back in respond to Raffi's question.

"Becoming the ally of me who is this foolish, weak, and small. I believe there are a lot of other people that you should choose. People with the qualification to stand above others—"

".....Fuh"

Fugil who listened to her talk expressionlessly until now smiled for the first time here.

"—Sacred Eclipse doesn't chose the person. Strong feeling. Relentless lamentation, it's a system that is led by that to bring salvation. What is called fate is opened up by one's own strength. But in reality, most of the time everything is decided completely in a place where one's own strength cannot reach."

Fugil looked up to the moon that was starting to be covered by cloud once more with a distant gaze.

"You have lived through a dark world where there wasn't even a single hope, not even a gleam of light. Therefore you possess extremely strong wish compared to people with capability. Even for this me, you are a human who has to be saved."

Saying that, the man moved away from the wall where he was leaning and started walking to exit the hidden room.

"After all the Sacred Eclipse originally was made for that. She tried to reach out her hand to the weakest people in the world."

"She was.....a kind person wasn't she, that person called Arshalia."

"....."

Raffi's words slipped out along with a powerless smile.

Fugil didn't react at all to that and turned his face toward her.

"When the strength residing inside you become complete, the last stage of this world revision will begin. In case that is completed, what are you going to wish for?"

"Let's see—"

Raffi hesitated slightly at Fugil's question.

But, she immediately straightened her back and took a deep breath before answering.

"I wish to obtain various things. Everything that I have to give up until now because of this fate—"

"Specifically?"

"Everything. Friends and comrades who I can trust, people who recognize me, making memory with them—. But, there is just one thing, that I have obtained."

"The power that Sacred Eclipse gave you?"

"No, it's something unrelated with this power."

Raffi suddenly smiled within the gloominess.

At that time, the moon that was hiding behind the cloud showed its face and its light illuminated her.

If there was anyone else other than Fugil in this place—someone who knew the queen from before, surely they would shudder.

Queen Raffi whose appearance was that of a thirty year old woman had transformed into an appearance that had trace of childishness in it, she looked the same age like Lisha.

There was a part of silver hair within her vividly golden hair.

That appearance that was wearing crimson dress resembled Raffi more than

ten years ago.

"It's Lisha..... My step daughter. She loved me who am empty like this and called me mother. She is facing forward optimistically without shrinking from her bitter past. A country where I and her can live in brazenly—and anything necessary to maintain it, I wish to obtain those from here on."

"I see....."

"Yes, please treat me well, Fugil. From here on too—forever."

Raffi walked through the passage of the hidden room with an elegant smile.

Before long Fugil also vanished from there.

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Part 9

"Haa, haa.....—haah.....!"

A few hours after defeating Prime Minister Nulph.

Lux's body was shuddering inside an abandoned building in the district of the capital that was trampled by Gigas.

There were only the presences of two people inside.

They secretly slipped into darkness and reached this place.

"Is it alright with this Aruji-sama? I cannot see anything, and also cannot hear anything but—"

Yoruka who was clad in Divine Drag-Ride Yato no Kami tilted her head while watching the recording—that was recorded a few hours ago using the special equipment type's ability.

When her violet magic eye that was applied with Baptism shined, she blinked in wonder.

Yoruka who was receiving the curse of perception manipulation couldn't see the content of the image recording.

More accurately speaking her brain wasn't perceiving a particular reality, even so it seemed there was something that she sensed.

".....? Something, it's faint but I can see it. A girl in dress who I'm not familiar with is—"

"I see. So Yoruka too can perceive it if only slightly."

Yoruka too might become able to perceive the normal world after Philuffy.

He found a fragment of hope there, however—.

"What, the.....!"

Lux who grasped the truth could only feel shocked.

Right before Lux was going to question Prime Minister Nulph, he told Yoruka to record an area inside the castle using Yato no Kami.

More accurately, he asked Philuffy to give a letter with the instruction he wrote to Yoruka, so that while Lux was meeting with Nulph, she could record a certain situation inside the castle.

Queen Raffi already used Automata to remodel Prime Minister Nulph, forcing him to act as the mastermind.

Lux first felt something was out of place due to the words of Sania and Ignid when they died.

How could they leak out Prime Minister Nulph's name when they were already turned into flesh puppet?

It was just too crude if their brainwashing was dispelled when they were dying.

If Prime Minister Nulph was the mastermind, he should take action so that the link to him absolutely wouldn't be discovered.

What happened with Sania was inconsistent with the policy of thoroughly sealing the mouth of anyone involved, as could be seen at the first and second loop when Waybra and Sieg were assassinated using Automata.

Therefore, the smoothness of how Lux found the clue in order to know the truth and even obtained the proof after that changed into doubt instead.

The true mastermind was leading him to the mistaken interpretation.

And then, Lux became convinced at the middle of his fight with the transformed Nulph.

Those two girls who guarded Nulph were Automata who controlled Nulph following the order of the mastermind.

By the way the Drake's recording that Lux obtained—the recording of Prime Minister Nulph and Dragon Marauder was surely a fake created using dummy of Sacred Eclipse's transformation.

Lux was faintly suspecting that he was being deceived while entering the battle pretending to not know anything.

At the side he asked Yoruka and Philuffy to do a certain matter.

He wanted them to search for anyone in the castle or around it who was observing the battle of Lux and Nulph.

Yoruka had received Baptism, but she still hadn't escaped the curse of world revision.

Therefore, if there was living thing's reaction that was caught by Yato no Kami's radar that Yoruka couldn't perceive but could be sensed by Philuffy—.

The location of the true mastermind who wasn't Nulph hiding inside the castle could be found.

Yato no Kami's radar reacted, then that place that caused difference in perception between Yoruka and Philuffy was pinned down. Yoruka who was hiding using camouflage then recorded the area just like she was asked.

And then, the truth was determined.

The trump card of Waybra and Sieg Kreutzer to usurp the ruling of the new kingdom, was the sin of Queen Raffi.

At the revolution five years ago, she handed the information of Count Atismata to Waybra. That fact got recorded.

The biological sister of the great man who defeated the evil government of the old empire was actually a perpetrator who was connected to the old empire behind the scene and killed her brother. If the proof of such fact was brought to light, the current government would definitely end.

Queen Raffi would be executed with almost definite certainty.

No matter how much amnesty she was given, at best it would still be a lifetime of imprisonment for her.

"No, wrong..... As expected, it's impossible."

This was incomparable with Lux and Airi who received criminal status through amnesty after the revolution. At that time both of them were treated coldly even among the imperial family of the old empire and got banished from the castle.

As for Raffi, she was the actual perpetrator of the crime, so there would be no way to vindicate her.

That was all the more so when she had used the name of her big brother the great man as unifying force of the country until now.

"Just, why....."

Why did Queen Raffi get cornered into this kind of situation?

From here it would be just Lux's imagination but, after that great battle in Avalon, there was a negotiation during these two weeks when he was resting.

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The old people who were the senior consuls raised in the old custom—.

The old empire faction that possessed the chauvinism tendency and the principle of aristocrat's supremacy.

They who became active to usurp the government using the information that Waybra sold to them along with Sieg Kreutzer demanded to Prime Minister Nulph for Queen Raffi's retirement.

The reward for that was most likely the uplifting of Sieg to become the candidate of the next general of new kingdom's military, as well as the bestowal of fortune and authority to the consuls of the old empire faction.

In order to take back their authority like the era of the old empire in the past—.

And then, they planned to take down the queen and made a contract with Prime Minister Nulph to their convenience in this timing when they could obtain a lot due to the negotiation for Avalon's technology and legacy.

Prime Minister Nulph abandoned Queen Raffi who possessed such weakness from her past. In exchange he attempted to be the one ruling the kingdom by granting authority to them.

If it was announced that Raffi who was the symbol of the new order couldn't maintain the country and Nulph ascended to the throne as her replacement, it would become easy for the intervention of the old empire faction to happen.

"What, the.....!"

Lux's shoulders dropped and he spat out those words once more.

In any case the old empire faction including Prime Minister Nulph would make the isolated Queen Raffi fall from the throne.

If she resisted, in the worst case her past sin might get published using the image recording.

The honor she had built until now as the little sister of the great man Count Atismata would be degraded and she wouldn't be able to escape from execution.

By the time Nulph yielded against the fact that was thrust before him and leaned toward the old empire faction, Queen Raffi's fate was decided.

The fate of destruction that couldn't be overturned.

A trampling down by the powerful people who possessed authority.

Raffi's lamentation that was heavier and deeper than anyone called Sacred Eclipse and Fugil to her.

In order to rebel against fate, Raffi used Avalon's power and slaughtered them through the course of the parade.

She destroyed all the image recording, and in the slightest chance someone noticed the loop and pursued the truth, she used Prime Minister Nulph as fake mastermind to mislead the pursuer while erasing him at the same time.

—That was the truth of the whole events that led to here.

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"What's the matter, Aruji-sama?"

It would be no use even if he talked about the circumstance of the matter to Yoruka who couldn't perceive this recording.

No, even if he told her, what would he do then?

Was he going to tell Lisha to kill Raffi who she dearly loved so much and who was going to maintain the peace after this?

Such, such thing was—.

".....No. It's nothing. Yoruka, can you return to the inn first?"

"I understand. Please be careful, Aruji-sama."

After hesitating slightly, Yoruka left the abandoned building.

"....."

Silence filled the empty room.

After a while, Lux leaned on the wall and looked up to the sky in a daze.

Now that the old empire had lost the image recording that was the trump card to bring down the queen, as well as their leader Waybra and Sieg, they wouldn't be able to do anything anymore.

If Lux kept silent, perhaps the new kingdom would head to a nice direction like this.

But, that would mean overlooking the world revision Fugil carried out as well as the murder occurring in the middle of the parade.

"Just.....what in the world should I do?"

The smile of Lisha who dearly loved her mother Queen Raffi was burned on Lux's eyelid.

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Part 10

Two gazes saw Lux returned to the inn before moving away from the inn.

Late at night of the parade's second day. Two Automatas were walking in the street.

".....In the end, he doesn't notice that he is tricked to think of Nulph as the mastermind dearimasu?"

"Based from Lux Arcadia's state, I think there is no problem nanodesu."

The Gear Leader of Hall with mechanical dog ears growing in her head—Ney Louches asked. In respond her fellow Automata La Krusche nodded.

The Divine Raiment of Artifact Ouroboros, Endless was something with two types.

First when it was used with only a single Drag-Ride, it would change the rule within the radius of a few kl with the Drag-Ride as the center.

And then the second type of Endless was when it was used in conjunction with Avalon's function of perception manipulation that resonated with all the Ruins, the world scale perception modification.

Because either type consumed vast amount of energy, when it was used consecutively the time necessary to charge the energy store would become long.

Employing them the Automatas was also the same.

Thus Raffi too couldn't just focus her effort to only monitoring Lux.

Because there was someone else other than Lux who was acting suspiciously.

"I thought he would tell the truth to the Key's Supervisor Krulcifer, it's unexpected dearimasu."

Nei Louches tilted her head while muttering.

Actually at the second loop the Automatas already finished dealing with all the recovered Drakes.

But, they had already received report that people like Lux and Airi obtained Baptism in Avalon, so there was a need to be wary of them.

There they injected parasite Abyss into the prisoners Sania and Ignid and laid a trap.

In case Lux came sniffing, they were ordered to not kill him but to mislead him to think that Prime Minister Nulph was the mastermind.

Raffi didn't have the intention to kill Lux and Syvalles members and did her utmost to avoid that.

After this users of Divine Drag-Ride would become important fighting force for the new kingdom.

Among them were the members of Syvalles who raised deeds of arms at the previous great battle, and Lux who was Lisha's knight and a member of Seven Dragon Paladins who became a hero within the country. Losing them wouldn't be a good plan.

Therefore the two weren't killed but guided into the false truth.

The scenario of Prime Minister Nulph colluding with the old empire faction and planned to take down the queen in reality was just like Lux imagined.

Thus Raffi modified Nulph's perception and put the blame as the mastermind of this case on him.

The possibility of breaking through the perception manipulation of Endless would increase depending on the degree of Baptism or Elixir they received. But it wasn't enough with just that, they also had to notice that something was out of place in the world, on top of that they had to deny the world and tried to break out of it.

If they thought that the present situation was correct, or that it was desirable for them, they would get caught on the net of perception manipulation that was put on them again.

In other words, if Lux killed Prime Minister Nulph thinking of him as the mastermind just as Raffi planned, and then he became convinced with everything—he wouldn't notice anything anymore at the next world revision.

Seeing that right now he didn't look he was telling anything to Krulcifer or other girls, the thought that Lux was deceived became conviction.

"It looks like Lux Arcadia get safely tricked dearimasu. With this it's hip hip hurray for us dearimasu."

"Then let's go back to master for now. The last big job is remaining after this so—"

The two Automata pulled out their Sword Device from the sheath and wore their respective Divine Drag-Ride.

They were summoning Drag-Ride in the middle of city although it was late at night, and yet there wasn't anyone noticing it. Except one person.

The night of the second day of the third loop was growing late.

The night passed with each person keeping their respective feeling in their chest.

Chapter 4 – The Captive Inside The Box

Part 1

"Nn, uu....."

"Lord-sama, are you waking up deyagarimasu?"

The odd but robotic tone of an Automata talked to the girl before her.

It was a silver space that was tinged with bluish white light.

Aeril Vi Arcadia was chained inside the metallic and cold room.

"How are you feeling? Do you remember my name deyagarimasu?"

"....."

The chained Aeril was stark naked without a single string covering her. She looked up at the girl in front of her.

".....This place? I'm, why, what is.....?"

"I got no obligation to tell you. I'll at least just listen to you."

There was sheep horns made from machine on the head of the girl who wearing a tight outfit that was similar with a pilot suit.

It showed that she was the Ruin's Gear Leader—the Automata who existed in this place.

"You are, Clan Lieze.....? Then this place, is, the Garden....."

"As expected you remember the eight people of the beginning deyagarimasu. Haa, how troubling. For me alone to be left out like this, I want to go look at the imperial capital for the first time after several hundred years you know? No, right now it is called the imperial capital isn't it?"

Clan Lieze muttered while showing a strange look of puffing up her cheeks while her expression stayed blank.

"....."

When the seven Grand Forces were installed in the Ruins, Garden was captured under Listelka's direction.

Aeril wasn't present at that time, but Aeril who was an imperial princess of the Lord knew the name of all the Automatas.

But, at present it seemed the Automatas received the control command of someone else and they were also remodeled to be stronger.

After all a Gear Leader was confining the Lord, Aeril who was originally their master.

"Are you....., planning,to kill me?"

When Aeril whispered that with half dozing tone, Clan Lieze sighed in exasperation.

"Even though I have healed you until this much, you said that terrible thing deyagarimasu. It's planned to remodel you by the current master's order, but the priority before that was to heal you from you dying and weakened. After all you have resistance toward nanomachine. The imperial family of the Lord really got troublesome thing done to them."

"....."

Aeril wracked her brain trying to grasp the situation while her eyes were staying lightless and blank.

But, her head wasn't working perhaps because of the drug injected into her.

(I see, I'm..... Getting the role, of being reused, as pawn.....)

After the loss against Fugil in the decisive battle in the abandoned capital Guernica, she wrung out her last strength of perception manipulation with the intention to send message to Lux, but was he safe?

She didn't know whether the other Seven Dragon Paladins were alive or dead, but at the very least Singlen should have died.

Aeril who was at the death's door was recovered by Avalon's Automata Arshalia.

Even among the Ruins, the Garden played the role as the treasure warehouse.

Because it also bore the burden as development base at the same time, it was a facility that excelled in remodeling, surgery, and manufacture function.

"Endless..... It will become impossible to extract information of Avalon if I myself got eliminated. That's why, I'm going to get conveniently brainwashed, is it....."

Clan Lieze's eyes opened wide and she scratched her head when she heard Aeril formed the words that surfaced inside her head.

".....It's surprising deyagarimasu. Your mind is still clear like that. Then, I'll arbitrarily make a proposal. Won't you negotiate with the current master? If you swear loyalty to the new kingdom's master, Raffi Atismata, you will be guaranteed a safe life deyagarimasu."

"_____"

"In any case even if you stay silent, in not so distant future your personality will be remodeled. I think it ain't too bad even if you submit here while it's still ain't that painful for you yeah?"

".....I, guess."

After hesitating slightly, Aeril smiled weakly.

In this situation she couldn't do anything to resist.

Rather than suffering for long, perhaps it would be faster to swear loyalty to the new ruler.

But,

"But, I'll.....refuse."

Aeril quietly formed her word with her frail expression and breathing.

Clan Lieze who saw that frowned with a dubious face.

"Why? Could it be you are a masochist deyagarimasu, Lord's imperial princess-sama?"

"The current master of you all, surely, they were someone with weak position, right.....? After all, she is someone who Automata Arshalia and Fugil and Sacred Eclipse allied themselves with."

"....."

The expression of the questioned Clan Lieze vanished and she fell silent.

That was because her program as an Automata that was commanded to keep secret was working.

"You see, since waking up, we the Lords used special power from beginning to end. Because we were persecuted, we got everything stolen from us, because we shouldered the fate of our clan, that's why it doesn't matter no matter what we do. We continued doing such thing by making justice as our excuse."

"Is that something that's not allowed?"

Clan Lieze tilted her horned head with an expression that vaguely looked human.

"My big sister, my little sister, and then me too, we all acted like that to a greater or lesser extent. There was no regret. Because we thought we could only do that, but....."

Aeril made a weak smile, even so she continued her words.

"After forcing such thing on other people, now that it's my turn to be the one in the side that get stolen from I don't want it, I cannot do such thing. It might be a tiny thing, but even I have my vanity as a Lord."

Aeril stared at the tube connected to her body and smiled fearlessly.

Clan Lieze silently turned her back on her in resignation.

"Human has really strange thinking deyagarimasu."

After seeing off Clan Lieze leaving, Aeril's consciousness was starting to cloud.

Her words just now were undoubtedly her true feeling, but she didn't say her other feeling.

(Besides, even in this situation, I still believe.....)

Just one, the only possibility of overturning this situation.

The possibility of Lux giving the answer—.

Part 2

"Nii-san. Please sit over there for a bit."

The night of the second day. When Lux returned to his room in the inn, Airi was waiting for him with her eyes looking a bit angry.

He instinctually understood that there was a scolding waiting for him. Perhaps it was his experience telling him.

Seeing how even was Noct beside her, Lux could surmise that they were killing time until Lux came back.

"Err, why is Noct also here?"

"Yes. I'm planning to serve as watcher, so that the talk won't go too long and Lux-san get enough sleep. After all the last party tomorrow will be in the castle too."

He thought that she might be here to be Airi's ally, but contrary to his expectation she was volunteering to be the stopper. It could be seen how well she knew about the power relationship of these siblings from this act.

"Since when Nii-san became someone who would lose focus and play at night in the middle of official business? Just because the battle against the Lords is over doesn't mean that we become common citizen you know?"

If Airi's preaching was summarized, it seemed she was telling him to not act carelessly in this or that without thinking of their own standing.

"Right now Nii-san is being pampered because you are a hero, but don't you understand that it's also bringing the same amount of danger? You are in a position where it won't be strange if people who don't think well of the new kingdom kidnap or attack you."

"Ah, right. Sorry....."

Other than that, there was also the matter of getting involved with representatives and important people from various countries which might invite its share of trouble.

She also warned him about little details like how at the present they were in the middle of the parade event so the attention of many people were focused on them.

Before long when the talk was going to be over, Airi took a sip of the completely cooled down tea and spoke.

"Good grief, it seems that you were also seen here and there flirting with Philuffy-san or Krulcifer-san—. So, how is it going, Nii-san?"

"Eh.....!?"

Lux was bewildered when the talk suddenly changed.

"Yes. There is no need to hide it. The students of the Academy had also witnessed it from afar."

"....."

Certainly in the middle of this parade he was acting together with those girls because of various circumstances.

Half of it was for solving the mystery of this world revision, an investigation to trace the back the clue, but it seemed that everyone had splendidly misunderstood it.

".....And, Nii-san, which one you are going out with?"

Airi seemed to perceive Lux's silence as affirmation and asked him while averting her eye fidgetingly.

Lux noticed her meaning after a few seconds passed and his face reddened.

"Eeh!? That's, you mean to ask—"

"Please don't make me say the rest-!"

Lux tried to confirm but Airi shut him down.

But, after wavering Lux couldn't say anything in the end.

It would be pointless even if he told Airi here about him accepting the confession from Krulcifer.

There was the possibility that the loop of the world revision would occur once

more. He couldn't show an unnatural reaction at that time and got noticed by the Automatas.

Above all else, he couldn't think of any reason to reject, he was unable to reject it.

For the time being the formal reply was put on hold until the last day of the parade but—.

"Haa, so you haven't decided."

"No, it's not like that."

"Then, who is it?"

Airi was blushing from embarrassment while looking up and stared fixedly at Lux.

Airi today was really persistent.

He didn't understand the reason but—.

"Celis-senpai too, I think that perhaps she love Nii-san. Her eyes when looking at you walking with other girl looked lonely."

"——"

'I see.'

Lux comprehended it for the first time here.

Most likely at the second loop too when he entered love relationship with Yoruka, she held herself back and gave up from saying her feeling.

She really hesitated to say it.

Celis at the first loop intended to confess by mustering out all her courage.

(Celis-senpai.....)

Thinking of that, a prickling pain ran inside his chest. It felt like his heart was being squeezed hard.

He intentionally didn't think about it but, Yoruka too was surely the same.

Regarding her, if there wasn't the circumstance at the second loop, she might not even confess her feeling to Lux.

"Besides Philuffy-san too, it looks like her condition is a bit strange you know?"

Then, what about Philuffy?

Lux realized about that when Airi told him like that.

He wondered how she was doing at the previous parade and the parade before it.

(.....Come to think of it, after the fight with Prime Minister Nulph, we parted from each other.)

She shouldn't get injured but, he was a bit worried.

"Airi, is it okay if I go checking on Phi-chan for a bit?"

"Feel free. The scolding too is enough already, also—"

"What?"

Airi took a deep breath to tell something to Lux.

But, in the end she didn't say anything and looked at him with a quiet smile.

"No, it's nothing. Please be careful not to stay too late."

"Yes. Sleep ahead of me if you get sleepy."

After exchanging only those words Lux headed to the room where Philuffy was staying in the same inn.

After that, there were only Airi and Noct remaining in Airi and Lux's room.

.

"—Is it alright Airi? You not telling Lux-san."

"Yes, I don't think it's something that should be heard from me."

Airi muttered with a lonely expression that looked conflicted.

"Since the past, I'm not good with Philuffy-san."

"Do you mean that you hate her?"

Airi shook her head slightly at Noct's question.

"It's not a problem with her personality or attitude, it's something that is

more fundamental. I think that surely, it's just jealousy. Because she has a lot of things that I don't have."

".....Yes. Certainly, that fact cannot be denied."

"Where are you looking while saying that!? Noct!"

Airi looked at her best friend with a twitching fixed stare.

But, she understood that it was a joke to soften the mood.

The era of the old empire.

Airi at her childhood was sickly and tended to get looked down at despite her status as an imperial family member, furthermore since losing her mother, she lived by depending on her big brother Lux.

But, in contrast with her who could only depend on her big brother at that time, Philuffy was giving various influences to Lux even from Airi's point of view.

Airi understood that exactly because Airi was looking at Lux more than anyone else.

She understood how big an existence Philuffy was inside her big brother.

What her big brother's true feeling toward Philuffy was.

What he obtained while being together with her.

Exactly because of that Airi was not good at dealing with her.

In contrast with Airi who was considering everything with logic and rationality, Philuffy herself was someone with few words, but she was seeing through the truth of everything with her instinct and intuition.

Even though normally she was silent and expressionless, she was able to express her feeling straightforwardly.

That aspect of her was charming, and enviable.

"I thought that surely someday, she would take away Nii-san from me."

Airi muttered that in a self-depreciation while smiling.

"Then, why are you mentioning about Philuffy-san just now?"

".....Why, I wonder."

Airi showed a vaguely powerless smile and answered Noct's question.

"Perhaps, it's because I don't want to see Nii-san sad. There is also how distressing it, pretending not to notice while noticing it."

"....."

Hearing Airi's muttering, Noct silently leaned closer to her.

"You are a really great little sister you know, Airi."

The level and calm black haired girl showed her rare smile.

.

Part 3

"Phi, chan.....?"

"Sorry, Lux-kun. Even though you expressly come to meet her."

In the most spacious room within the inn.

When Relie met him at the door and invited him in, there was Philuffy lying on the bed.

Beside her the personal doctor of the Academy was also present.

It was late at night, so it shouldn't be strange even if she was sleeping, and yet Lux noticed her abnormal condition in a glance.

Her body was sweating and she was breathing as though she was having nightmare from fever.

"Why? What in the world is—"

"It looks like her fatigue come back to her. This is because she forced herself right away without listening to me."

"Is it, my fault.....?"

After standing stock still for a while, Lux muttered in a daze.

The Ragnarok transplanted in her, Yggdrasil was annihilated and the command from it vanished.

Therefore Lux was under the impression that Philuffy was safe already.

There was no way that was true.

At the very least, fighting using Abyssification continuously put burden on her body in exchange of drawing out further strength that surpassed human.

The strengthening method of fusing with Divine Drag-Ride using something like B-Blood should also become a cause that worsened the symptom.

However—.

"Why, you didn't tell me? Relie-san should know about Philuffy's condition in

detail."

"That's, because it's this girl's wish."

Relie didn't look angry or even negligent.

She spoke with an expression that looked faintly proud, and lonely.

"Because she wanted to become Lux-kun's strength. She doesn't want to worry you."

"....."

Lux couldn't ask why anymore.

Why did she fought by mustering her strength to the limit, until she her life was at risk like this?

Because she wanted to continue staying at his side. Lux understood that.

That time too when she was opposing Yggdrassil at the training camp in Ries Island.

Also at the time when they headed together to Heiburg Republic and fought against the King of Vices, and also the exploration of the deep level floor of Avalon and defeating Hayes.

And then this time too, she stayed quiet and accompanied Lux.

All this time, Philuffy was staying at his side for him because she had her own reason.

He didn't notice that.

No—, he was pretending to not notice it.

He contented himself with her feeling and the fact that he had a peculiar status.

"Her spasm has settled down already so it's alright. Thank you."

After Relie said that to the female doctor of the Academy, she got out.

Relie muttered with a small voice in front of Philuffy who was in a deep sleep.

"Phi will hate me later if I say this to Lux-kun..... But, perhaps it's alright even if I tell you. About Phi's ture feeling, toward you."

".....Please, do."

Originally he should hear it from Philuffy, but right now he intentionally asked it from Relie.

And then a few minutes later—, Lux went outside the inn.

.

Part 4

"Fuu....."

This time he was in a distance that couldn't be called as taking a walk.

He had informed Airi just in case, so he only walked around the inn once.

There wasn't any Automata around.

Most likely it was because the doubt to Lux had cleared up.

There was also the possibility that he just didn't realize it and right now they were waiting for him to make a move, but he couldn't know that.

"I'm.....why"

Philuffy's words that Relie told him were burned into his chest even now.

How that when this parade was over, Philuffy intended to temporarily take some time for recuperation.

How Relie was stopped from telling that to Lux.

The reason why was something that was really unexpected.

Why didn't she confess to Lux in the middle of the parade even though she loved Lux?

That wasn't because she lost her chance to the other girls or because she was being considerate to the other girls.

If Philuffy herself was released from the perception curse and she knew that Lux's criminal collar would be taken off at the last day, she should be able to say it.

And yet, why didn't she?

.

[I don't want Lu-chan, to suffer more than this. If he is staying at the side of someone beyond help like me, surely, it will be painful for him.]

.

When Relie asked her about it at the middle of the parade, Philuffy smiled slightly and said that to her.

When Lux heard that, he couldn't endure his tears from spilling.

Philuffy too surely had recalled her memory of five years ago that was sealed.

She was kidnapped to Ries Island for human experiment and entered a state of apparent death. Lux who saw that then wailed in sorrow. That memory.

Lux left behind a burden on Philuffy. She didn't want to see him lamenting and suffering from being unable to save her.

That was why, most likely she intended to pull back without confessing her own feeling.

".....Just, what am I doing?"

Philuffy didn't want Lux to act recklessly in order to apply treatment for her in the negotiation concerning Avalon with all the other countries.

That was why she was trying to go through this parade looking like there was nothing wrong with her.

In Lux's life that was filled with ups and downs, she was a place that was like a sunny spot.

He was able to feel peaceful the most beside Philuffy, it was comfortable beside her.

However, because she was an existence that was closer to him than anyone, there was also a feeling of reservation inside him.

Because until now—staying as they are was happiness for him.

"I see. Surely, that's how it is....."

After thinking for a while, Lux finally noticed.

Why was Philuffy thinking of Lux until that far?

Because that was—the same like Lux's own feeling toward Philuffy.

Because she was most important to him than anyone else.

It wasn't from sense of responsibility or obligation, but because he loved her.

"Sorry, Phi-chan..... I swear, I'll save you. Not for anyone else's sake, but for my own sake—"

He also had to convey his feeling regarding her to her.

When this world revision was over, after his criminal collar was taken off.

Swearing that once more, Lux looked up to the sky.

"——"

The night wind felt pleasant on his body that was still languid and flushed.

But, on the contrary of that, his heart was darkly clouded.

"I, what should I—"

During the repeated three days period, there were several things that he noticed.

The true identity of the mastermind who caused this loop—Queen Raffi who was possessed by Sacred Eclipse used that power to make her new kingdom prospered.

Fugil assisted Raffi due to his own mission.

Just like how he once cooperated with Count Atismata and Lux, and the Lords after that—.

However, Lux didn't understand what he should do after this.

If he stopped this world revision and defeated Raffi, what would happen to the new kingdom?

There was no way he could just overlook this. If Aeril might still be alive, he had to save her.

But, if he did that—Lux would become the new kingdom's enemy.

The place for him to belong that he finally obtained at the end of a long battle, he would discard it away by his own hand.

And then he would also become unable to respond to the feeling of the girls close to him.

He would drag even them into this battle that could ruin them.

"Everyone, I.....what should"

When he muttered that once more, *clack* a faint sound of shoes rang out.

A presence that he didn't sense at the slightest until now appeared behind him.

".....Are you, the one that boss mentioned?"

"—!?"

A shock that tightly grasped his heart ran through him.

The moment Lux noticed and held his breath, a Drag-Ride's Dagger was thrust before his eyes.

"Don't make any sound. Calm down, I don't have any intention to harm you."

When Lux focused his sight, inside the darkness there was a petite silhouette wearing general purpose Drag-Ride Drake.

The person was wearing a hat and mask other than the pilot suit. Short blond hair peeked out from the gap of the hat and mask.

Most likely this person used the camouflage function of the Drake and waited for Lux's arrival.

It seemed like this person was a boy who was still young from their tone but—.

"You are.....?"

Lux's mind was in chaos, but he somehow pretended to be calm and replied.

Lux was at disadvantage in this situation no matter how he struggled, so it was pointless to resist.

"My name is Alma Kilzrake. A member of Kilzrake family, and a candidate to be the next underboss. Lux Arcadia. My boss wants to meet you. Can you come with me?"(TN: This person talk in boyish way, with rough wording and 'ore' to refer himself)

"Kilzrake family.....? Is it a type of mafia?"

Lux kept both his hands held up while asking his question in confusion.

Then the boy sighed in exasperation.

"What the hell. You don't know about us Kilzrake? How dull. We are famous bodyguard of companies in Marcafal Kingdom. In this country, you will get it if you ask Relie Aingram. Haa."

'I see', Lux guessed from this atmosphere.

A mafia family of Marcafal Kingdom.

He was able to accept it from the boy's rough tone and attitude.

"Well ain't matter. So, you gonna come? Even if you say no I'll still bring you though. It's fine, it won't even take fifteen minutes."

Oddly, it was just as Airi was worried about, was he being targeted by an unknown organization?

Even so Lux himself was surprisingly calm.

Perhaps it was because in contrast to his dangerous atmosphere, the boy wasn't directing hostility and killing intent toward him.

"What is your group's objective? Ransom money? Or perhaps—"

"It's the same like you. We notice the loop of this parade and want to destroy it. And, right now the Automatas too are pulling back to the castle. It's finally the chance for doing secret talk yeah."

"—!?"

The blonde boy's words changed Lux's expression.

Someone who noticed this world revision and destroyed the perception curse.

An existence that shouldn't exist except Fugil and Queen Raffi.

"How do you know the secret of this world revision? The repeated three days of parade—"

"The circumstance of that is also similar with you. —Though I'm sayin' that, boss also helped me to notice it. It ain't possible with only having experience of Baptism. At present I noticed for real was from this third loop."

The boy talked nonchalantly with a tone that sounded a bit proud.

"Well, I searched various places following boss's instructions from the first loop though. I felt the chill when I almost got found out y'know? I thought I'm really good at tailing someone but, this sucks."

"Wait a second!? That's, don't tell me—?"

The time at the previous loop when he was together with Yoruka, the two of them curiously found someone's silhouette.

At that time they completely thought that it was the work of someone related with Queen Raffi or Prime Minister Nulph but—.

"Could it be, after that you also headed toward the castle?"

".....That's right. So I got found out by that much huh, good grief."

The boy's voice changed into dejection under the mask.

Lux had grasped Yoruka's exceptional sensing ability, but as expected their side didn't seem to have noticed it.

Silence where both sides probed each other's intention continued for around thirty seconds, when before long the other side leaked a sigh.

"Well, fine. Who cares whether you noticed or not, it ain't matter as long as you listen to our talk."

".....And, you are a subordinate of that Kilzrake family?"

"I'm a newcomer who only joined several years ago, but I'm a candidate for the next leader of the Drag-Knight force. Well, I can't hold a candle to the boss before the boss got injured though. But if I train for five more years—"

"Just what is your group's business with me?"

".....Haa"

The boy looked quiet put off because Lux interrupted him when he was talking about himself.

He still didn't know whether the boy was ally or enemy, but he seemed to be a boy with relatively abundant emotion.

"I told you at the beginning, this is boss's order. The boss wants to meet with you. Come later to the place written in this paper. Then, I've definitely convey it to you okay?"

The boy only left behind a paper and said that, then he activated the Drake's camouflage function and his figure completely vanished.

Lux who was left alone beside the rear entrance of the inn dropped his gaze toward the paper.

Chapter 5 – The Hero's Whereabouts

Part 1

The last day of the parade was approaching. Now it was late at night of the second day.

"Fu-ku-ku-ku..... At last it will be over for the queen with this."

At the residence area of the nobles some distance away from the castle—.

There was a block that was a gathering of dozens of palatial residences. The nickname of the block was the empire district.

Each residence had vast ground. They were existing inside the castle town as the embers of the old empire's glory that had reigned through more than five hundred years.

So to speak it was the area of the faction of the old-timer consuls—the nobles of the senate.

Dozens of consuls were executed as political criminal at the time of the revolution.

But, the bunches who were doing their evil deed behind the scene were remaining in great number even now.

The aged consuls were gathering in a reception hall of a large mansion that was the gathering place of such bunches.

The mansion that was used as a social meeting place with the objective of entertaining diplomat was built in a huge size so that it could be used jointly as dance hall or amusement center.

But, there were many great rumors about the place in the era of the old empire, currently it wasn't used anymore for entertaining people from other country or feudal lords.

"Yes, it seems that Prime Minister Nulph has chosen to make peace with us. From now on the new era will finally begin."

The eldest person there leaked out an emotionally deep smile. Seeing that the expression of his fellow comrade also burst into smile.

—Bad rumors.

At the period when the despotic administration of the old empire was at the extreme, cruel games were prevalent among the nobles.

It was a cruel act using people that were secured as slaves when raiding other country or from within their own territory.

If they were female then the way they were used was still better, the male slaves were made to kill each other, or else they were even used as replacement of target for archery and the like. Their death was filled sadness and anguish to the extreme.

At the time of the destruction of the old empire, such underground activity was crushed along with its manager, but there were also participating members who managed to evade capture. A lot of them remained right now in this place.

With the change to the regime of the new kingdom, their authority at the surface was taken away, but with their connection to big companies, their influence to each group hadn't been lost.

But, behind their obedience in these five years, they were starting to move in order to take back their pasts glory.

Their motive wasn't anything significant.

The uncountable evil deed that they had committed.

They simply wanted to do that again with all their heart, fattened their own pocket, and indulged in debauchery.

Their insatiable greed was directed to the ancient technology and treasure that was estimated to be brought from Avalon through the negotiation after this.

"Things we've got to look forward to is increasing. Weapon of ancient technology and machine to produce Abyss. Just how much it will improve our battle force—"

"I'm interested in the human resources. There might be more people with the

same appearance like the imperial family of the old empire still sleeping right? I wish to receive those girls no matter what and receive information from them."

A fat and old man licked his lips and slurped vulgarly.

People with similar looks like the imperial family of the old empire in the past—the existence with greater authority than themselves. Degrading and making such people to serve them was their distorted desire.

"All of you are really enthusiastic. An old person like me is interested to the so called Elixir. Also, the machine that preserved the Lords for so many years is also interesting."

For the old people with short remaining lifespan, the secret medicine and medical procedure of perpetual youth was something that they wished to know.

Treasure, battle potential, slave, youth.

The old people who lived by indulging in their desire as they pleased for a long time were exposing ugly face that looked like goblin.

"The queen too, I'll be affectionate with her if she seem to be meek. I'll get tired of her right away I think but—"

Right after one person said that loudly and laughed—,

.

"Even though five years has passed since the revolution succeeded, you people hasn't changed at all."

.

A chilly voice that froze the air resounded inside the room.

"But, well, this is my mistake. Even while knowing about the existence of you all, I could only leave you alone for long.....it was a blunder solely due to my powerlessness. I can't help but feel ashamed."

"—Wha!?"

A girl's voice that didn't match this place was suddenly voiced.

In respond to that the dozens old consuls looked at each other's face. It was

then a girl appeared in the middle of the hall.

"He, her majesty queen Raffi!?"

"Why are you in this place—!?"

The consuls of the old empire faction were shocked. Raffi looked around at them while making an exasperated gaze.

Using the perception manipulation of Endless, they couldn't see the current figure of Raffi who had obtained back her youth, instead they were looking at her 30 old year appearance.

[Is this alright master? For you to intentionally show your figure personally like this. It will be leaked if even a single person escape this place no matter how miniscule that chance is?]

"It's alright Arshalia."

Raffi casted down her eyes and replied to her aide the Gear Leader who was at far away.

She was able to directly receive the thought of an Automata inside her head was because of the nanomachine receiver inside her body that was made by those girls.

However, it was limited to within a certain range—a radius of several kl in total.

"There is meaning in me intentionally showing myself. How ugly it is, an existence that is only committing evil deed while hiding from other people—. This will serve as admonition for myself who obtained strength."

"Ho, ho-ho-how did you enter here!? What are the guards doing!?"

"What are you talking about since just now!? Her majesty is—?"

The consuls were in chaos while shouting in panic.

But, perhaps there was only minimum security placed around this mansion, because their movement was slower than expected.

[But, with such reasoning, isn't your majesty already putting in one of your legs inside like this?]

"You are telling me that, Arshalia?"

'Haa', Raffi put her hand non her cheek with a troubled look and let out a sigh.

[Pardon my rudeness. It seemed that I talked needlessly.]

"No, if possible please stay like that, so that I can become a good queen."

Raffi replied large-heartedly to Arshalia. At the same time she pulled out a Sword Device from the sheath on her waist.

"Wha-!?"

"This is too disappointing. To think that the true identity of [intelligence] that has been accumulated through the five hundred years of the empire' history is just a shallow lump of greed..... As I thought, there is no other way except to remove the rotten tumor."

Raffi walked with clacking ound from the heel of her shoes and grasped the collar of the oldest person at the innermost place.

She lifted up the old body that was unable to even stand anymore, and stabbed the tip of her sword into the throat that looked like dead tree.

"Hih!? Wha, what are you doing!? Do you think that it can be forgiven for a rule of a country to do such outrage!?"

"There is no need to receive forgiveness from anyone. I do it because I want to. Ah, thinking back now even something this trivial—it was never done since I became the ruler of the country."

Raffi showed an expression that contained deep emotion somewhere in it and muttered smilingly.

"Though more accurately speaking, I left everything to Nulph and couldn't do it. Being powerless is really bitter isn't it. Unable to say what has to be said, and unable to do what must be done. Only being able to take care to not offend the other people..... It's no different at all from my past self. But—"

The eyes of Raffi who was muttering self-depreciatingly were tinged with bewitching violet coloration.

"It's only now at this time, that I too can move for the sake of justice. Just like my big brother the great man, just like Lux, and then—"

Shred, the Sword Device tore the eldest man from his windpipe to his skull top.

The body that lost its head powerlessly collapsed, then Raffi quickly swung her sword to throw off the blood clinging on it.

"Wha, aa.....!?"

"Deranged! Queen Raffi is deranged! Kill! KILL HERRRRR-!"

"What a terrible accusation. It's all of you who are deranged here. Well, it won't become like this if you all have the intelligence to understand what you are told."

The guards finally rushed in and they raised their respective weapon and attacked.

However, Raffi's figure vanished at the next moment. He teleported to outside the mansion.

"-.....fuu"

Raffi pressed her hand on her head and lightly staggered right after she landed on the ground.

"I'll leave the rest to you, Arshalia. It looks like my body iss still not used to the power of seven Ragnarok. I'm also uneasy whether I can use the Sacred Eclipse's offshoot well. As expected, I won't be able to move well without going through Baptism once more at Avalon."

[Understood. Leave this place to those girls.]

The reception hall of the mansion was filled with chaos.

The lookout on the rooftop noticed that there were several girls around the mansion.

Automata—the girls with the characteristic similar face and mechanical ears on their head simultaneously drew out their Sword Device.

"—Then, let's begin. Though it's ad that our first joint work is cleaning trash."

The girl with mechanical part like an ant's feelers growing from his head—the Gear Leader of Babel, Yos Tork muttered with a unique tone.

Arshalia who served as the mediator of several Automatas around the mansion sent telepathic voice to everyone chidingly.

[It's not cleaning, but a send off. In order to awaken the vessel of the new king—]

The six girls nodded at the same time.

The people whose position was originally to manage the seven Ruins were starting to display their hidden strength.

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The Gear Leader who managed the first Ruin Babel, Yos Tork.

The Gear Leader who managed the second Ruin Dungeon, Lu Caria.

The Gear Leader who managed the third Ruin Ark, La Krusche.

The Gear Leader who managed the fourth Ruin Hall, Nei Louches.

The Gear Leader who managed the fifth Ruin Gigas, El Fajura.

The Gear Leader who managed the sixth Ruin Garden, Clan Lieze, absent.

The Gear Leader who managed the seventh Ruin Moon, Re Plica.

The Gear Leader who managed Avalon, Arshalia.

.

The [Eight Instrumentalists] who safeguarded the new king gathered here and moved in preparation for the last revision.

Inside the pitch black darkness, the tragedy of a slaughter that didn't worth to be called a fight raised its curtain.

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Part 2

"Yo, so you come old empire's prince. You are sneaking around even though it's in the middle of parade."

Late at night of the second day of the parade, Lux followed the letter that was handed to him by the boy and headed to the hideout of Kilzrake family.

On his way heading to a district with bad public order that was shown in the map, he was called out by a boy clad in old rag.

It seemed he was in disguise, but Lux remembered his voice and face.

The blond haired boy who negotiated with Lux just now—.

"You are—!? Your name.....is Alma Kilzrake?"

"Hee, so you remember my name? Is it that you got good memory, or perhaps it's the skill of a former prince?"

"I think it's nothing special, it's normal."

"Hmmm. Is that so."

He glared scrutinizingly at Lux who was deeply pulling down the hood attached on his robe to cover his face.

"Still, I saw the parade but, you are really damn popular eh. I pitied you hearing the rumor that in the past you were a chore prince or something, but aren't cha unexpectedly led a nice life? Haa, as I thought I hate blessed guy."

The old men's wear and shabby hat and goggle he was wearing made the boy blended into the surrounding like a youth that worked in construction.

And yet, his features were well ordered so it was interesting.

"Don't talk too loudly 'kay. Just because it looks like there ain't no one, it will be game over if we got found out yeah? More importantly you, I got something to ask, is that alright?"

"Aren't you going to guide me to your boss's place?"

He came here in secret to not worry Airi and everyone else, so he wanted to

finish the business quickly.

"It ain't about that. There is something personal I wanna ask. Just one question, it not gonna take long."

The boy with his blond hair tied jerked his face close to Lux.

"You. Do you know about Black Hero?"

".....Eh?"

Right now it was a nostalgic question in a sense.

The last time he was asked like this face to face, was it by Krulcifer when he first enrolled into the Academy?

It was a question that was directly related to Lux's past, but he managed to not show any agitation on his face.

"I know him. But it's not about his identity. I've only caught sight of him briefly."

"Chih, useless. Or rather I'm jealous. So even the former prince of the empire know jack squat huh. This is the hateful guy who ruined your own country right?"

"Eh? Well....., that's right but"

"Hah..... Goddamn coward. I'm amazed that boss got a business with a guy like you. Listen well. I'm taking you because that's the order, but just try makes any move to the boss. I'm gonna chase you bastard to the death and murder you, get it?"

Lux nodded toward the boy's fierce glare.

He wasn't acting timid but, it appeared the boy accepted his reaction.

"Then, I'll show you the way just as planned. This way."

Like that they weaved their way through the back alley and headed to the outskirts of the castle town.

The place they arrived at was an abandoned old stately mansion made from brick.

"Isn't this house empty? It looks like it's not used though—"

"It's not actually used. We will move out when we finished."

The building looked empty, but its underground room was spacious and functioned as their hideout.

Kilzrake family.

He first heard that it was the name of a famous familia in Marcafal Kingdom.

However, why was such group was in the capital in the middle of this parade?

Normally Lux wouldn't even think to get involved with such suspicious group, but he had a reason for going along with this.

Marcafal Kingdom's mafia.

From a glance this looked like some kind of trap, but he got a hunch that was nearly a kind of conviction.

"This is boss's room. Don't be rude okay?"

".....Excuse me."

After knocking, there was no reply so they twisted the door knob.

Lux parted from Alma at the room's entrance and he turned speechless when entering.

Inside there was Magialca sitting on a wheelchair.

"—You are, Captain Magialca!?"

"Oho, to be able to perceive my appearance in this state, as expected from my lover who I acknowledged. No, right now it's better if you call me Ilu Kilzrake."

The characteristic orange hair that was did into a hairstyle in ring shape.

Her personality and fearless grin that didn't match her petite and youthful look was exactly the appearance of the captain of the Seven Dragon Paladins.

However, her look was completely different from before.

Her right arm seemed to be broken. It was fixed in place by a splint, her left leg was also dangling down powerlessly from the wheelchair.

Her right eye was covered with an eye patch, and her body was bandaged here and there.

"That, looks—"

"Yeah. Even this state now is already far better than at first. After all until a week ago it was almost impossible to even wake up by myself."

"....."

Magialca spoke indifferently, but Lux was speechless at her grave wounds.

"What are you so shocked about? That's really unlike the Black Hero who put an end to the long tyrannical rule of the old empire. You are used to see wound at this level right?"

"How—?"

"How am I alive, you ask? Don't look at other people like they are ghost."

Magialca smiled wryly and took a sip at the tea on the table.

"Well, in reality it's also mysterious for me. The Seven Dragon Paladins were annihilated at the abandoned capital Guernica two weeks ago—even I thought that everyone excluding you died without exception."

Yes.

Lux couldn't even grasp what happened at that time to the degree that he couldn't believe the sight in front of him.

In the middle of witnessing the battle of Fugil against the Seven Dragon Paladins, Lux was carried away by Magialca's aide Lolotte and left that place.

After that, the Seven Dragon Paladins crushed Fugil and the Lords.

The Avalon was put under control by Aeryl's hand.

—The people's perception should become like that at the surface.

On the other hand Lux escaped the curse of world revision by Ouroboros's Divine Raiment and learned that Aeryl, Magialca, and Singlen weren't present at the parade's party but—.

"How, can Captain Magialca—"

"Let me tell you in order. I first woke up around two weeks ago in real time. At that time I was dying, but the medical care worked and I hung on my life barely. Though at the surface it looked like I died."

"How did that happen?"

Lux tilted his head at Magialca's speech that sounded like a riddle. She then continued her story.

"I gave my subordinates detailed instruction beforehand that in case I needed to be rescued from that battle, they must not announce my survival to anyone else, in order to hide myself and focus in recovery."

Magialca said that and stirred slightly.



She seemed to be trying to shrug her shoulders, but that was the best she

could do.

"And then, the current host of Sacred Eclipse who don't know about my survival prepared my replacement using world revision. They intentionally propped up an impostor must be to advance the negotiation smoothly."

If there was loss of member of Seven Dragon Paladins, it would be necessary for some complex procedure to improve the power balance.

There was a possibility that the country that lost their Seven Dragon Paladins representative would claim that they were fighting hard to the degree that they paid a great sacrifice of losing their main fighting force, and so in the negotiation they would demand considerable amount of compensation.

With this Lux became even more convinced that Raffi was the mastermind.

"Fortunately in Marcafal Kingdom I have one more position. That position is as the leader of Kilzrake family, Ilu Kilzrake."

".....!? But, from what I heard before, Kilzrake family is—"

They introduced themselves as company bodyguard, but he heard from the boy named Alma that it was a gathering of outlaws that was handling illegal goods at the underground.

The boss of the organization that was famous in Marcafal Kingdom was actually Magialca herself.

"You can't protect your turf by only acting nice. You can protect yourself from external enemy for the first time by possessing armed might and authority at the same level with your enemy. The affair of illegal goods and violence too, by treating them as the bodyguards of the underworld, the order is preserved. Well, in the first place Kilzrake itself was something I purchased after its first leader died."

"But, why are you telling me this—"

Magialca who by nature didn't belong under any country shouldn't be concerned about the circumstance of the new kingdom.

And yet, why was she contacting Lux even if she had to brave danger to do it?

"I want to meet you."

Magialca grinned a wicked looking smile and said that.

Lux couldn't immediately understood her meaning.

"You see, actually I obtained Elixir from some time ago. That's why I'm able to notice the world revision like this."

It was really like Magialca to keep quiet about it.

By making Queen Raffi thought of her as dead and making her fake existing in the new kingdom, it was a decisive out of place factor that became the impetus for her to notice the truth.

When thinking that, Lux gasped and noticed a certain thing.

"Please wait! If Captain Magialca is alive, then Aeryl and Vice Captain Singlen are—!?"

"Good grief, so you are worried about Aeryl right after confirming my safety, I'm jealous. —Don't worry, Aeryl is surely alive. For now that is."

"....."

That reply which was said with a fearless grin brightened Lux's expression.

"But the situation is bad you know? Most likely Aeryl is held somewhere in the Ruin of this new kingdom. Until her primary role come."

"Is, that so....."

Even the relieve only lasted briefly. Lux let out a long sigh.

"What's wrong? What are you hesitating about? This isn't like you."

Magialca asked Lux who was looking up to the ceiling.

But, Lux couldn't reply immediately.

He breathed out the feeling he was holding in his chest since the defeat in that abandoned capital until this point of time.

"Captain Magialca is—. Why did you fight till that far? Against the man who was my older brother, against Fugil who was called as the hero of the beginning."

"I wonder why. Even though someone at my level noticed just how faint my

chance of victory the instant I faced him."

Magialca sighed 'fuh' with an amused looking smile and muttered.

Her figure was covered with painful looking wounds, but there wasn't any sign of regret from her.

"Lux. Let me ask you back, why did you stand against the tyrannical rule of the old empire? Although it couldn't be realized without the cooperation of Fugil and Count Atismata at that time, it still didn't change that it was a dangerous battle right?"

"That's—"

"Is it for the sake of your little sister and childhood friend—my pupil?"

Lux nodded wordlessly.

But, Magialca scoffed at that answer.

".....That's not it. If that was all, you can just take the two of them and escape to another country. —No, I guess we don't know about that, you might be unable to find asylum anywhere. Then, after the revolution, why did you wander for five years as chore prince? For atoning? There must be many other ways to do that. There should be the path of fighting at the front line as Drag-Knight if you want to atone."

"That's—"

Lux was at a loss of what to say, in contrast Magialca's smile deepened.

"For a ruler, there is something that absolutely needed in order to stand above people. That is pride and dignity. All this time you lived until now with those things pushing you."

Pride and, dignity.

Lux repeated those words inside his chest.

He wondered whether he really possessed such things.

"You tried to walk the path that you pictured to be correct as an imperial prince. You don't just abandon yourself to follow what other people told you, you tried to know other people and face them as someone with the bloodline of

ruler within you—. That was why you searched Fugil in order to confirm your answer while polishing your own skill."

As a Drag-Knight, and also as a statesman.

Even after his defeat, he was unconsciously aiming for that.

Was that, really the case?

"You are overestimating me. Because, right now I'm—already"

After saying that to Magialca, he exited the underground room of the hideout.

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The morning sun rose and the morning of the third day of the parade arrived.

And then Lux returned to a new ordinary day.

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Part 3

"—Then, it's fine if we just go as planned right, boss?"

Alma Kilzrake smiled with an innocent face that had trace of childishness in it.

"Yes. Your talent is passable. You manage to learn a skill of the old empire's strongest Drag-Knight—the Black Hero after all."

"I want you to call it as skill instead of talent. I'm working really hard even like this yeah."

"Hard work, eh."

Magialca who was wearing black eye patch smiled looking somewhat mean-spiritedly.

"More importantly, I got it. If I accomplish this mission, it will be possible to destroy the new kingdom."

"Well, certainly it will be like that at the end but, are you alright with that? I won't mind if you value your life and run away."

"—Hah, that's not like you boss."

Alma showed a smile full of confidence under her goggled hat.

From here on she would begin acting in order to accomplish the mission from Magialca.

The operation to head toward the Garden and saved Aeryl who was captured in its depth.

The reason of this operation's idea was the Automatas' movement.

While all the Automatas were ordered to clean up after the world revision since before this parade, it was only the Automata of the Garden Clan Lieze whose appearance wasn't confirmed.

There was no reason that could be thought up to intentionally decrease their number under this situation.

If there was any reason at all, it would be the possibility that the Automata

was already engaged in an important duty beforehand.

Magialca judged that duty was the treatment and brainwashing of the captured Aerial.

Magialca intentionally didn't tell Lux about this, but just a bit of time ago Raffi was slaughtering the old consuls of the old empire faction.

The reason why she was looping this parade until now was to use the time to thoroughly root out the mutinous force like Waybra, Sieg Kreutzer, and Prime Minister Nulph who were planning to bring her down.

But even they had been removed. At present—all troubles that opposed the ruling of the new kingdom had been severed. With that the last revision should be carried out after this.

That was to say, that in order to overwrite the various inconsistencies that occurred in this period, a large-scale incident would be caused and it would be imprinted into the people's memory as the lynchpin.

There was no need to actually cause an incident for real.

It was fine to only imprint to the people's memory that such thing had happened, so there was no problem by just activating Endless once more.

Therefore, Fugil and Raffi would have to head to Avalon.

Magialca had finished investigating that Avalon itself was brought to the new kingdom and it was positioned some distance away from the capital.

They would attack Garden the instant Raffi teleported to the capital's outskirts. That would be their greatest and last chance.

"First is to recover Aerial."

The curse of perception from Ouroboros's Divine Raiment—Endless, it used Avalon's power and made the seven Ruins resonated.

That means, if even a single one of the Ruin's activation device, the Grand Force was taken off, the world revision wouldn't be usable anymore.

But, because the removal of Grand Force was impossible if it wasn't by the Lords or the family of traitor—or by someone with the bloodline of Arcadia

Empir, first the priority was to take Aerial back.

There should be a heavy security in there, even so it should consist of Automata or Abyss at most.

Alma heard that the greatest threat the Ragnaroks were already destroyed. And against Abyss she would be able to win easily if the opponent was medium size or smaller.

That would be even truer if she was leading the elites of Kilzrake.

"Well, I'll assign that newcomer with you so it's going to be fine. If you feel lost then you can rely on that guy. Whether it's in battle or about your life."

"....."

Alma scowled in displeasure at Magialca's suggestive words.

Alma Kilzrake's past. Magialca was talking about her deep fate with the new kingdom.

"You're saying that my revenge is mistaken?"

"I know that you were betrayed and abandoned and hold a grudge at them. But, the way your heart get warped will lead you to ruin for sure, that's how unjustified resentment is."

"That ain't persuasive at all hearing it from boss."

"I understand it really well exactly because I got a bad personality."

Alma looked aside sulkily. Magialca talked in jest seeing that.

As expected, that might be what was called the wisdom of age, even now her speech was skilled.

"It must be some kind of fate too that you who were born in new kingdom drifted into my place. You can ascertain it with your own eyes. Then—I'll leave it to you."

"Yeah, I'll finish your mission and obtain even more strength. I'll master piloting a Divine Drag-Ride and destroy the new kingdom. That is—my punishment to them who betrayed me."

"Then, depart right away. It will be the meet up time soon."

"Yeah, I'm going boss."

Alma saluted her leader Ilu Kilzrake and put on the goggle on her hat.

And then she headed to the Garden along with the elite Drag-Knights who gathered upstairs.

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Part 4

Around that time—, in the afternoon of the parade's last day.

While the winter sun was shining, Queen Raffi along with Fugil were inside Avalon that was at the outskirts of the capital.

"The possibility of receiving disturbance in the middle of this surgery.....is it? We should have exterminate the bud of the rebellion though. Who could it be, for example?"

Inside the room were huge silver walls, countless pipes, and interlacing gears. That place was truly the heart part of a machine.

It was the starting point of the place that created and converted everything.

Inside the room of Avalon that was brought here from abandoned capital Guernica, Raffi was muttering while being stark naked.

Sacred Eclipse that assimilated with Raffi herself fused the ability of all Ragnarok until now and provided her with overwhelming power, but it was unclear whether she was able to control it.

In short, it was possible that the Sacred Eclipse would be influenced by negative emotion and rampaged to carry out massacre.

This surgery was so that Raffi could control the timing of that to a certain degree using her will.

Automata Arhsalia was at her side to guard her and controlled the surgery.

"I don't know. However there is no plan that is perfect. It's better to be resolved that such thing might happen."

"Is that including the possibility of me being unable to endure this surgery and died?"

Raffi who returned to her youthful appearance as a girl asked Arshalia that.

"Don't you feel scared? That you might die just like this. That perhaps Fugil and I are tricking you."

The question from an emotionless Automata.

However Raffi smiled for some reason hearing that.

Once she was tricked by the man called Waybra and he grasped her past weakness. She was dropped into the abyss of despair.

"That hero of beginning, Fugil, I heard that previously he sided with the Lords. Most likely he parted with them due to some kind of reason and murdered them."

"....."

Raffi talked indifferently even knowing that Fugil betrayed his own lord. Arshalia stared back emotionlessly at her.

"Surely for Fugil, rather than personal motive—or country's fate, he has something more important, his own belief. Something that cannot be called as things like evil or justice."

Arshalia didn't reply.

She only moved her fingers to trace the air like a conductor and the surrounding machine began to move.

"Then, we are starting. Master."

Raffi lied down on the central bed. The device of Avalon was activated and the surrounding gears started to move, the operation then began.

The limbs of the figure that turned into a girl from the assimilation with Sacred Eclipse was bound, and liquid that was filled with medicine was injected.

"—However, I didn't have anything in me. Like wanting to save the new kingdom, or wanting to protect the people, or inheriting the dying will of my big brother. I didn't even harbor any of those feelings while sitting on the throne."

The devices moved jointly with each other. A needle that was laced with Elixir stabbed into her heart.

Raffi continued with her words to distract herself from the slight pain.

"I was only continuing to run for more than ten years. Pursued by fear, pursued by reality, without even any courage to resist or standing up against it

alone—. Unable to say it to anyone."

"....."

Sacred Eclipse that was fused with her flesh reacted to those words.

Raffi's eyes were tinged with mysterious light and filled with power.

"I had never genuinely lived even once. I believe you won't kill me here, and even if the surgery failed I won't die. Because I still—haven't even lived until now."

Thump, her restrained body bent backward from the conditional reflex.

For half a minute device was inserted into her body part that was contaminated by inhuman thing in order to control it.

In the middle of that, the Automata Arshalia asked to distract Raffi's attention.

"Then, what are you wishing for? With that strongest power"

"—! Happi, ness.....!"

Raffi raised a stifled voice and smiled while enduring the pain.

"I want, to protect, the happiness that I found for the first time....."

Arshalia who guessed Raffi's true feeling comprehended it.

The reason Sacred Eclipse responded to Raffi's call.

"Please don't worry, master."

Beside Raffi, the Automata Arshalia silently spoke to her.

"I won't let anyone be a hindrance. The preparation for interception in the Garden is completed. The strongest guard that you placed there is—"

".....You're right. Then, it looks like the surgery is over, so I'll rest for a bit. Please tell this to him. That I wish for him to activate Ouroboros's Divine Raiment from now."

"—By your will. Do you hear that, Fugil?"

[—Yeah, let's start. Endless.]

Outside Avalon, the chalk white Artifact was standing high to the sky.

The armor of the gigantic dragon that resembled a fortress was faintly tinged with light of seven colors.

The last revision would start from now at the New Year parade.

In order to cleanse the sin of the world.

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Part 5

"What are you doing! It's forbidden to enter here! Uwaah.....!?"

Alma who was wearing a mask flew with his EX Wyvern and crossed over the Ruin's checking station.

Of course, the Drag-Knights of the new kingdom that protected the station swarmed the intruder. But Alma who was entrusted to be the captain dealt with them composedly.

"Boss's expectation is right. This place is empty cause they split the personnel for the capital's security."

He left the rest to several of his subordinates and descended in front of the Garden.

"The new kingdom is nothing. It will be easy win even if it turns into a fight."

"No—, I think your movement was shoddy."

Beside the triumphant Alma, the newcomer who entered the squad only just now with Magialca's recommendation spoke from under his mask.

"What's with you, it went well just now ain't it?"

"If you wanted to draw the attention of the guards by going ahead, you should slow down a bit more. If you shake them off too fast and overlooked some, the rear of our squad will get caught. Just now you were only lucky by chance."

"Hah, acting like a hot shot even though you're just a newcomer. Minions who can't keep up means that they are just unskilled."

"The squad captain's job is also to train them so that won't happen. If this force is entrusted to you from Captain Magialca—"

"Chih..... It's not gonna be long until the transfer start, don't daddle!"

To enter the Garden, there was no other way except by standing beside the wall and waited until the automatic transfer to the inside happened within a certain interval.

The squad entered into the Ruin before long. Right after that Alma who received the interior's geographical map quickly flew ahead.

Even if Abyss appeared they had fighting force that could deal with it, but they had no free time to standstill considering their objective.

Thus they chased away Abyss by playing the horn flute.

The target was the deepest part of Garden.

The priority was to secure Aeryl Vi Arcadia who was imprisoned there.

"Fufu. What, this ain't anything difficult. So even a Ruin is just at this level."

The smile was kept pasted on Alma's mouth. They broke through the gateways one after another.

He heard that the greatest obstacle in invading the Ruin here which was the gatekeeper—the Ragnarok too had been already destroyed and wasn't here anymore.

"Then, there isn't any reason for me to fail! Besides, I might have already surpassed the strength of the Syvalles even!"

Her tone was mixed with excitement, but his movement didn't have any shoddiness in it.

He was a bit belligerent, but he didn't lose sight of his objective and struck down the enemy with the shortest and fastest movement.

While the morale of his subordinates were also rising, the masked young man who was sent by Magialca as his new subordinate alone whispered in a low voice.

"That's dangerous Alma. Just because the power output of EX Wyvern is high, you still drew too close when attacking. It's also important to concentrate to the battle in front of you, but you will get injured if you neglect paying attention to the surrounding."

"Hah! Don't talk big newcomer! Only boss can give order to me!"

"....."

But, Alma ignored the warning and sped up further.

In the past when the newcomer young man came here, a transfer device that was made from strange object was necessary, but right now a part of the wall was destroyed and they were able to progress to the depth directly.

They moved to the quasi space existing inside the Garden that looked like forest and advanced further. There another door appeared.

The floor with silver walls they retreated from in the past.

After landing there, there was a single wide central pathway with wall at the left and right, and countless room doors there.

"This place—. The depth of Garden that boss mentioned. It's what they called the Ruin's other function huh....."

After Alma muttered that with a dubious expression, the newcomer young man who accompanied his squad tilted his head.

"The Ruin's, other function?"

"It's function as treasure chest that is."

Alma answered quickly and curtly.

"The treasure warehouse that store, manage, and seal any kind of thing. I heard that dangerous thing would even get called if we touch carelessly."

He slowly walked through the spacious pathway while still wearing his Drag-Ride.

Different from the route until now, from here on it would be an uncharted territory.

"But no worry newcomer. Our objective, Aeryl Vi Arcadia is alone. We can just take the other treasures after recovering her safely. We need to strengthen our force after all."

".....Be careful, there is a strange presence."

"Hah! Got cold feet? I ain't scared of anything. Since I lost my family and discarded my name, I have gone through terrible experiences all along until now."

"Terrible, experiences?"

".....That's right. But that ain't what hurt me the most. There is my aunt too but, only Onee-chan—my big sister, even though I believed that there is no way she would side with the like of old empire, and yet....."

Grit, Alma gritted his teeth under the mask.

The newcomer young man tilted his head, but right after that Alma's subordinates came their way.

"Captain, I think it's more efficient to split up here and search—"

"Guess you're right. There is too many room here. Everyone split up—"

Alma quickly assessed the situation and followed his subordinate's advice.

Certainly there was countless room in this treasure warehouse floor. Even if they assumed that Aeryl was here, it would be difficult to find her.

And then, they had not much time for delay.

If they didn't remove the Grand Force from here and made Avalon to enter system down, they might not have any more chance.

But, the newcomer young man who accompanied the squad gave advice calmly.

"No, we should act in group of two at least. Also, it's better to place a Drake user and two people as guards in the rendezvous point. We can grasp the movement of the whole like that and the safety will increase."

"Now see here....."

Alma took off his mask and showed an exasperated expression.

"That's only done in dangerous place right? In here we haven't met any Abyss since midway, not even one. Are you unable to believe my decision huh!?"

Intimidation.

Or rather, those must be words for the sake of maintaining his dignity as squad captain, but the newcomer young man himself couldn't possibly just overlook the dangerous situation.

"Then, at the very least let me act as your guard."

"Aah? Me who can use EX Wyvern need you who use Wyvern to guard me? Just say it honestly that you want to get protected."

Alma snickered under the mask that he wore once more and quickly gave instruction to his subordinates.

A few minutes after the investigation of the treasure warehouse began, it suddenly happened.

[Captain! A girl who looks like Aeril Vi Arcadia is discovered! Please come over here!]

One of the several Drake users in the squad sent Dragon Voice communication excitedly.

Alma who heard that made a satisfied smile and immediately returned to the central passage. He flew his EX Wyvern toward the direction of the call.

The newcomer young man who followed behind him raised his voice toward the impatient captain.

"Wait! It's better to not hurry there. Something is strange.....let's call everyone for now and gather in the center. It will be dangerous if this is a trap."

"Haa..... Troublesome. There is a mountain of other treasures we should take here. No way I can act leisurely like that."

Alma sighed in exasperation and hurried toward the room the Dragon Voice came from.

A long straight passage—, Alma was heading toward the room that was around the middle of that, and put his hand on the silver door there.

The instant it opened, the naked body of a girl restrained deep inside the room came into view.

The silver hair that was the proof of the Lord and asymmetrically colored eyes.

(So she is Aeril! She is alive as expected!)

But, the instant his attention was taken by that, the surrounding wall turned into the color of flesh and spear of wooden root wriggled. It flew toward Alma's

chest.

(Impossible—a trap!?)

The whole body of Alma whose eyes opened wide stiffened.

Her guard was wide open due to her posture of opening the door, so he couldn't defend the attack with the weapon at hand.

Therefore it was an attack of certain kill that took advantage of this timing.

With EX Wyvern the barrier should be solid, but that tentacle that was like wooden root approached with an abnormal speed that surpassed Alma's reaction.

(It's incomparable with the Abysses until now! The barrier's reinforcement—it won't make it!)

Alma who was taken by surprise shuddered.

It would be a fatal attack if it hit directly.

In the middle of that timing with his consciousness slowed to the limit—, the newcomer who was a mere Wyvern user blocked the tentacle's tip with his Blade.

"Uah.....!?"

Everything was a happening that passed within an instant of eye blink.

"-.....!?"

Alma who barely escaped the predicament leaped further backward to dodge.

As though to pursue Alma who returned to the central passage, countless tentacles launched consecutive attack one after another from inside the room—however, the newcomer Drag-Knight who stood between them repelled everything with the Blade at his hand.

(What, the. These guys!? This monster, and this newcomer guy who blocked its attacks—)

Shockwave shook the treasure warehouse's passage and sound of destruction echoed.

The surrounding subordinates who caught the sound reacted all at once.

"Captain Alma, what happened!?"

"Enemy? Please get a hold of yourself!"

"Don't come here! You'll get killed!"

Alma was relieved inside his heart that he didn't end up blurting [Save me!].

A glimpse of power that was incomparable from anything he saw until now.

His shaking from the presence of such thing wouldn't stop.

At the same time, Alma noticed that the young man who Magialca attached to the squad as a newcomer possessed strength that far surpassed his imagination.

But, his squad comrades who were upset that their captain fell into crisis wouldn't listen to his order.

Several of them approached to save Alma, but in that instant an intense shockwave burst out.

"Watch out-!"

.

—*GAUN-!*

.

The air exploded and the silver wall and objects in the central passage were squashed with bizarre metallic sound.

Alma didn't even notice that it was caused by a mere Howling Roar from the Drag-Knight inside the room.

He was only able to understand the result.

With speed that eye couldn't follow the newcomer Drag-Knight covered Alma from the terrific roar that was the enemy's counterattack. Because of that he was blown away.

A part of his armor was smashed and scattered in pieces midair.

The subordinates who were similarly blown away crashed on the metallic

wall. Several of them had their Drag-Ride dispelled from the damage.

There was no leeway to be in a daze within the situation that was changing hectically.

If the newcomer didn't shield him, Alma's EX Wyvern would surely get done in too.

"God.....damnit!"

The welling up anger and frustration controlled Alma and cleared up the mist of fear in his mind temporarily.

He didn't know what the enemy was, but at this rate they would be annihilated.

In that case he who was still able to move had to fight.

With such fierce fighting spirit, he was going to leap once more into the room, it was then—.

".....Wha-!?"

The figure inside the room that was the perpetrator of the destructive scene was one step ahead of Alma and showed his figure before him.

"—I only intended that as a simple greeting though. But most of you are falling asleep instead. What a disrespectful lot."

A Drag-Knight appeared into the central passage along with a mocking laugh.

It was the first time Alma saw that figure that was clad in jet black Divine Drag-Ride but—Alma knew him.

The legendary Drag-Knight who was considered as the one destroying the infamous old empire from the shadow.

"Flying type, black Divine Drag-Ride..... Don't tell me, the Black, Hero.....!? Why, in this place—"

What were the tentacles coming out from the room before this?

Since when he worn that armor?

Why was he in this place?

Several questions formed at the same time, however the reality before his eyes wasn't erased.

"Pro, protect Captain Alma-!"

"How dare you did that to our comrades! Die!"

Several subordinates Drag-Knight who didn't get dragged into the Howling Roar simultaneously assaulted the jet black Drag-Knight.

—But, the next instant.

"Guh, a.....!?"

Everyone who attacked was slashed at their vitals along with their armor in less than even a second. They died instantly.

The simultaneous attacks from multiple directions were dealt with easily by swinging the great sword freely to every direction, intercepting the attacks through the shortest route with fastest speed.

That excessive strength and mercilessness put a halt in Alma's mind.

"What is this? Are you Black Hero?"

The man who was called like that by Alma showed the composure of someone who wasn't touched by even a drop of his victims' blood spurt and answered.

"I don't know who are you but let me answer—that is just an illusion. Is the like of a petty thief who comes to steal the Lord believes in such thing? My name is Fugil Arcadia. The hero of beginning who carry the mission to maintain the equilibrium of this world along with Sacred Eclipse."

"What, did you say.....!?"

He was laughed at scornfully by the Black Hero who he believed in and lost his words.

For Alma, the Black Hero was an absolute existence that he idolized.

He was abandoned when he was a child—, since he was a child he was living a harsh life. In order to survive that life, he was harboring aspiration toward the Drag-Knight who destroyed the hateful old empire in one night.

Alma was shocked that it was laughed down like this.

But, he barely recalled his position and responsibility, and exerted the spirit to resist.

"You are.....protecting this place to prevent Aeryl's rescue!? Are you allying yourself with the new kingdom's Raffi, the monster queen who is possessed by Sacred Eclipse? Why!?"

"The reason I fight, is for the sake of the existence that should be saved."

Fugil instantly answered Alma's question without any hesitation.

"The system that maintain the world's equilibrium and save the weak—the Sacred Eclipse. I exist in order to lead and watch over the person chosen by that Sacred Eclipse. Destroying the old empire was nothing more than a process. I dealt with them simply because I judged them as unnecessary. I didn't have the slightest intention of saving you all."

The Black Hero wouldn't become the ally of Alma and others. The enemy informed them that he would exterminate them without the slightest mercy.

"Mons, ter....."

Behind Alma whose thought was completely stopped, his subordinates were shaking toward the disastrous scene.

Everyone here already noticed.

The battle force before their eyes was at different dimension.

They who were here right now were really—unable to even put a scratch on this opponent.

Therefore, they threw away their mission and everything else, and turned their back to the threat before their eyes.

Fugil who saw that spat out his words in exasperation.

"How boring. You lot aren't amusing at all. But, now that you have reach this far—there is no way I can let any of you get away."

"—Then then, we can begin now deyagarimasu, right?"

A girl with particular appearance smoothly showed her face from inside the

room. Alma opened her eyes wide in surprise.

"You are, Automata—!?"

"I'm Garden's Gear Leader, Clan Lieze. There is no need to remember it though, all of you are going to die soon anyway deyagarimasu."

The girl wearing a tight suit like a pilot suit on her body and mechanical part that looked like goat horn growing on her head muttered.

Snap, when she snapped her fingers, a bizarre discordant sound resounded at the same time.

.

—*liiiiiiiiiiiiiiiii!*

.

".....Kuh!?"

It was the sound of horn flute that called the Abyss.

Clan Lieze was calling the Abysses inside the Ruin to this place using her authority as Gear Leader. Noticing that the subordinates who numbered in dozens went pale.

"Don't tell me, she is summoning Abyss here!?"

"All the Abysses we avoided until now are going to gather here!?"

"Let's hurry escape to the passage! We won't make it in time like this!"

"Don't go-!? That black Drag-Knight is blocking the path!"

It was a pandemonium.

The fear toward the countdown toward unavoidable destruction was transmitted and Alma's teeth made clattering sound.

"What the hell..... This is"

Alma's blond haired head kept hanging down while he let out a small mutter.

"Aren't you the Black Hero huh!? Aren't you going to save us huh!? Why, why—"

"It's simply because all of you aren't chosen."

Fugil thrust the reality toward Alma who yelled in despair.

"Hero is—the ally of the weak. When you are dropped into the bottom of earth where there is no way to overturn it, you will be saved if you are lucky. It's Sacred Eclipse who chooses the person. I'm only following its decision."

"Such.....thing. Even ^{watashi} I, even ^{ore} I, had everything taken away from me! I was despised before finally I reach a position where I can take revenge, and yet! Why—. Such thing.....!"

Five years ago, Alma was abandoned by the people he believed in.

—No, he fell into a trap.

Due to the secret information leaked by the noble aunt who he idolized, his family's hideout was attacked, their servants massacred, and he was captured as slave.

Even then, he persisted with her pride as a noble, and yet he heard that the big sister who he respected turned traitor and switched to the enemy's camp.

After that, he accidentally managed to escape from the severe violence and spent several hellish years wandering the slum.

Now after he was picked up by Kilzrake family and obtained backing, it should be his time to get even with his family who forgot him and enjoyed happiness with no care in the world.

In respond to Alma's tedious talk, Fugil turned a chilled gaze toward him and said.

"If someone is saved, someone else will meet bitter experience. That is the law of the world. People with role that cause influence to the system will be given the right. Justified revenge you say? Don't prattle when you are just a bandit possessed by greed planning to destroy the new kingdom."

"U, a..... AAAAAAAAAA—!?"

Alma whose self was completely denied creamed and rushed forward.

But, the instant she took the stance to unleash the sure kill Quick Draw, the flash of sword that Fugil's Bahamut already unleashed severed the wrist of her right armored arm.

The Quick Draw that Fugil unleashed.

Even though it was unleashed after Alma, the speed easily surpassed his Quick Draw.

(My Quick Draw cannot be compared.....! Is this—the real Black Hero's..... power)

He believed in chivalrous thief.

The nameless Drag-Knight who put an end to the evil old empire.

That person took up the sword not because of greed, but for the sake of his own justice, an existence that was completely unaffected by things like politics or reward.

He believed, that there was hero like that.

But, now that this person said it certainly that was true.

It was natural for weaker people who possessed position to be saved.

He himself was half-baked and didn't get chosen.

"—Die."

Fugil's cold gaze pierced the dazed Alma.

"Captain Alma-!?"

In that moment when his subordinates all screamed—, a voice could be heard.

"So you are going to discard him, Fugil? —Then, I'll save him!"

GAG!!.....!

Right after Bahamut's great sword was fast approaching toward Alma's neck, another great sword drove it away.

That Drag-Ride that saved him from the deadly predicament was also shining

in jet black color.

".....So you came. The [weakest] imperial prince who cannot choose anything."

Fugil who saw the one confronting him muttered with a derisive laugh.

".....There are two, Black Hero—!?"

Alma was staring at that scene and muttered in a daze.

The mask of the newcomer Drag-Knight who covered Alma just now was broken, exposing the silver hair and grey eyes possessed by the bloodline of Arcadia Empire.

The true identity of the young man who entered the squad by Magialca's instruction was Lux Arcadia.

He too was also clad in the similar Divine Drag-Ride that was the symbol of the Black Hero—Bahamut.

"Wha, what is, going on, deyagarimasu!?"

The Automata Clan Lieze who saw that made *bakin* metallic sound and crumbled.

Before she herself could pull out her Sword Device and entered her fighting form, Lux was slightly faster to destroy her.

"Is that your answer, Lux? Rebelling toward the hero's mission—"

"....."

Lux was silent in respond.

He was simply glaring silently at his eldest brother's face.

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Part 6

—A few hours ago.

In an underground room of a palatial mansion at the outskirts of the castle town.

Lux answered Magialca's question inside the hideout of Kilzrake mansion that Alma brought him into.

He knew the reality of the enemy that was too powerful.

He knew the great impact of losing something from fighting.

He didn't know whether he was able to choose the right thing or not.

"You are overestimating me. Because, right now I'm—already"

He was hesitating, whether to fight or not.

He heard Lisha's feeling toward Queen Raffi.

Above all else he sympathized with the harsh life that Queen Raffi went through.

He was harboring doubt whether taking away power from her and judging her sin was really the right thing to do.

"By the way—Singlen Shelbrit. That guy seems to be genuinely dead."

Suddenly Magialca changed the topic.

He had predicted it, but as expected it seemed he was killed.

He was a man who wasn't compatible with Lux and there were also times when they were hostile to each other but, he was undoubtedly a prodigious great man.

"It's an ironic story but—that must be the proof that he was able to make Fugil to recognize him as enemy. I and, the other Seven Dragon Paladins were unable to come up on the same stage in the end."

For Fugil, Singlen wasn't a piece on the board, he was a person who he had to kill no matter what at that time.

In short, at that time Singlen was pressing hard on Fugil until that far.

There was even loneliness that could be vaguely felt from the tone of Magialca who was saying that.

"Singlen embodied the ideal ruler that Fugil wished for. And then in fact he was recognized by him at that time. And yet, why did he challenge Fugil even if he had to risk his life—even you understand why right?"

"I—....."

"You wanted to fight as an imperial prince of the old empire. Isn't that right? Hm?"

Her tone and expression were mean spirited.

Magialca poked at Lux's cheek with a gesture that was really like her.

Her fingertip was shaking, showing that her body wouldn't move properly.

He was an imperial prince of the infamous Arcadia Empire. However he had the pride as someone who inherited the blood of ruler.

He thought that it couldn't go on like this, that he had a righteous duty, a mission.

That was why he chose to destroy his own country and carried it out.

".....As the result someone would become sacrifice, someone will suffer loss. Because you thought there was a need for that, you decided to carry it out in a way where you did it to the best of your ability right? You ascertained with your own eyes and ears and decided to save people right? Then—as a man what need is there to feel shame, what need is there to hesitate."

Thump

Lux's heart throbbed hearing that.

"Stifling down your true wish, then persuading yourself that it can't be helped and live without even fighting. That is also a possible path. But—you were unable to endure doing such thing. Just like Singlen, and the other Seven Dragon Paladins."

"Captain, Magialca....."

"It's unfortunate but, I cannot fight anymore as Drag-Knight with this body. But, I can lend strength to you. Now, you better go in order to fulfill your own wish. Beat your own kingship into your big brother."

"_____"

A few seconds later. Lux nodded and asked her for her cooperation once more. And then, Lux went outside the hideout.

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Part 7

"—Alma. Rescue Aeryl for me. She is inside the room you entered just now right?"

"Eh.....?"

The young man's mask was broken and his bare face was exposed. Lux Arcadia gave his instruction.

The appearance of one more user of jet black Divine Drag-Ride—Bahamut caused Alma to be unable to hide his bewilderment.

(Why, is there, one more Black Hero—)

"Alma"

"Ye, yes-!"

Alma reflexively replied when he was addressed once more.

Their other objective was Aeryl's rescue.

But, right now Fugil was blocking the central passage that was connecting to that room.

The room couldn't be approached carelessly.

"I'll take care of Fugil and the swarm of Abyss the Automata called. You lead your subordinates and rescue Aeryl, and then follow her instruction. Extract out the Grand Force."

"Eh.....!? Aa..... Bu, but"

Alma comprehended the intention of Lux's instruction while feeling bewildered.

As expected that was impossible.

Whether it was about facing that Fugil, the Drag-Knight with strength that was in different dimension, and he would be facing him alone at that.

And also about doing something somehow about the swarm of Abysses that were coming here in the dozens.

"It's, alright..... Leave it, to, him"

".....-!?"

At that time, the hoarse voice of a girl flowed in from the room that was facing the central passage.

Alma didn't notice that it was Aeryl's voice, but it pushed his back and he resolved himself.

Either way, at this rate it wasn't a situation where they could easily escape.

In that case there was no other way but to place their bet on the young man called Lux.

(Against the man, who might be the Black Hero I admired—)

"—Do you think I'll let that, foolish little brother?"

The next moment, Fugil's Bahamut glided to attack Alma's EX Wyvern.

But, Lux also accelerated his Divine Drag-Ride in concert and took the stance of interception.

.

[—Reload on Fire]

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The voice of the two overlapped and the two Bahamut activated their Divine Raiment simultaneously.

Crimson light surged from the black armor and applied compression strengthening.

"You are intending to win? Against this me who raised you to be the nucleus of the revolution—"

"I'll win. If it's the current me, against the current you—"

"Self-conceit will bring ruin to yourself. Just like your father the emperor."

When Bahamut's Divine Raiment, the compression strengthening was used at one's own time, the first five second period would be decelerated to become several times slower, while the five seconds period after that would be

accelerated until several times faster.

The next moment after the first five seconds passed, the two who were accelerated by several times began their attack.

"—HAAAaAH!"

GO-!, the two opposing mechanical dragons penetrated the wall of atmosphere and clashed.

Under the equal situation where both sides accelerated until several times over, dozens of slashes crossed in mere five seconds.

".....It's pointless. I know all of your habit. There is no way for you to win against me."

"—That is when talking about me five years ago right?"

Lux's expression didn't move at the slightest toward Fugil's provocation while he replied.

The moment their Divine Raiment ran out, Lux landed a slash at the fastest speed on Fugil's armored shoulder.

"-.....!?"

The Force Core was impacted strongly and the Drag-Ride's movement halted.

Lux pushed him into the treasure warehouse room that had its door opened. The object inside crumbled and buried him alive.

".....-!? All hands, recover boxes from nearby rooms as many as you can just as planned. Give first aid to the wounded that still alive and then head deeper inside!"

Alma who saw that raised his voice and gave his instruction.

He himself also flew into a nearby room. Inside a naked girl was laid down with countless cords connected to her.

"Thank, you. I don't, know who you are, but....."

"Magialca Zen Vanfrick's subordinate, Kilzrake family's Alma! I came to rescue you!"

Alma quickly introduced himself like that and took off the cords.

Aeril was held up in Alma's arms and her expression loosened slightly.

"Lux-kun. So he came for me..... Just as I thought."

"Wha, what the hell is that guy!? Just what is he!? Why does he got the same Divine Drag-Ride with the Black Hero—"

"He is.....the person, who I love, a really strong boy. Now, while we can..... We have to, take out the Grand Force from the Garden....."

Aeril's consciousness was still cloudy and she was breathing roughly. Even so she desperately reached out her hand.

When they came out of the door, Lux who was taking position in the central passage pointed his Drag-Ride's fingertip to deeper inside.

"—Go. I won't let the Abysses touch you all."

"-.....Got it! Let's go you guys! We're gonna complete our second objective!"

Alma somehow rallied up his broken spirit and flew while leading his subordinates.

Fortunately his squad was still functioning.

But, that wasn't Alma's achievement.

It was the instruction of this newcomer young man in front of him.

(Who is, this man—? This guy's calm judgment and bottomless strength.....!)

While feeling shocked, Alma pulled out his spare Sword Device and summoned a Drake.

He equipped it and then carried Aeril before flying deeper into the passage.

Midway Aeril grabbed Alma's upper arm tightly while her eyes were still looking blank.

"Wait..... Just one thing, before taking Grand Force, there is something..... that I have, to take..... Something to steal, from the treasure warehouse."

"My bad but, we got no time for that. A lot of Abysses are going to rush here soon.....!"

Alma had rallied his squad, but there was no time.

If the summoned Abysses gathered in this passage, his squad would be routed all at once.

Even if they tried to avoid the Abysses, their horn flute just got destroyed a moment ago.

But, Lux informed without a single change in expression.

"—No, let's follow what Aeryl say. Either way at the present the battle strength of Kilzrake force is insufficient. Of course the recovery of Grand Force is the priority but, we cannot let go of this chance."

".....-!? Are you sane!? My Drake's radar showed that more than a hundred Abyss are rushing this way y'know?"

Alma raised his voice, but Lux wasn't moved at all.

"There is no problem. Either way there is only one entrance to this place. If we hole up there, we won't need to face a lot of Abysses all at once. I want you to make the vanguards hold them back using close range weapon and block the entrance. If you buy me time, I'll defeat the rest outside this central passage."

"Wha....."

Under his mask Alma made an expression that was midway between laughing and amazed.

Something like defeating that many Abysses alone as long as they bought him time couldn't even be considered a joke.

And yet, Alma was speechless seeing the young man in front of him declaring that without hesitation.

"If you are wearing a Drake, it will be easy to give instruction for that. Just be careful of Fugil's movement. Leave the rest to me."

Lux only aid that before heading outside the central passage while still wearing Bahamut.

The remaining subordinate Drag-Knights were a total of twenty people. They hurriedly looked at Alma for instruction.

"Wha, what are we going to do Alma-sama!? The swarm of Abysses will arrive here soon! I, I think we should retreat while we can now though—!?"

"A, aa....."

His Drake's radar certainly displayed a great amount of Abysses.

Thinking carefully, there wasn't even any need for consideration.

Even though this squad was the elite force of Kilzrake family, their battle strength was far away from matching a hundred Abysses.

Alma immediately calculated so, but for some reason he was unable to nod at his subordinate's appeal.

(.....What am I thinking? What is impossible is impossible. Even if this man is in the same level with the Black Hero for example, such thing is—)

Alma hesitated for a few seconds.

However, the situation changed completely in that little time.

"Captain Alma! The, they're coming!? The Abysses' travel speed far surpassed our imagination."

"Chih—!"

Belatedly Alma noticed that since the beginning there was no such thing like an escape route.

The Gear Leader of Garden, Clan Lieze had prepared beforehand against the assault of Alma and others. In other words she must have also secured the route for the Abysses to gather into this treasure warehouse.

They were already unable to retreat from this treasure warehouse floor with so many Abysses crowding the entrance.

Now that it came to this Alma judged that he could only make a gamble. He raised his voice.

"We are continuing the mission! Leave the central passage to the newcomer alone, we are searching the inside! Leave the wounded at the center of the formation and protect them! Two people who still have strength to spare, stay with me to assist, the rest protect the rear! Hurry!"

He resolved himself.

Or rather, Alma accepted his fate from the lack of option and took command.

There was no way a single Drag-Knight could hold against so many Abysses no matter what kind of unknown Divine Drag-Ride they had.

Surely the many Abysses will broke through the newcomer young man and into the entrance in the blink of eye and they will bite off at the squad's rear.

(What the hell! It's too.....just too rash! Rebelling against someone who obtained Avalon is actually this terrifying.....)

Inside his heart Alma was shaken by terror that made him wanted to cry.

He thought he had become strong.

He obtained Drag-Ride, learned the hero's technique, so he would accomplish his revenge to the family that abandoned him.

But, that was just an illusion.

Realizing the menace of the mastermind who was manipulating this world, of the enemy's mightiness, he painfully realized his own powerlessness.

He wanted to run, to hide, he wanted to prostate and begged for his life.

It didn't matter even if he couldn't take revenge anymore.

It would be great if he could just live.

".....It's, scary, right? I un.....derstand, that feeling."

"-.....!?"

The naked girl he was carrying weakly smiled and spoke with a small voice that was like a fly's buzzing.

"I was, like that too..... I was scared all the time, that's, not shameful. People are, everyone—. Are weak human so, it's scary....."

Being pitied by this girl who was receiving brainwashing that was like a torture, his last remaining fragment of dignity encouraged Alma who was almost breaking.

"Damn, it.....! Whe, where should we go huh, Lord!? You said it right!? There

is something you need to get! Don't fall asleep on me yet!"

"Yes. You are, strong..... First, that way..... When coming here before, there was something, bothering me....."

Aeril gave instruction to Alma with her hazy consciousness.

They entered five rooms one after another, where Aeril used her Lord's authority to open up boxes or securing the boxes themselves. When they finished taking the content of the fifth room, Alma couldn't hold himself back and raised his voice.

"Oi Lord! It's enough already right!? If we don't at least obtain the Grand Force, I won't have any face to look at the boss—"

"Captain Alma, it's trouble! My radar caught reaction of Abysses!"

"-.....! They came huh!?"

Surely a huge swarm of Abysses was flooding into the entrance of the central passage of the treasure warehouse level.

They didn't make it in time.

It already wasn't the time to recover the Grand Force.

If they didn't retreat—escape from here as soon as possible they would be annihilated.

(But, even if we manage to break out of this passage, will we make it? There is still ten more minute until the next scheduled transfer to outside of Garden's wall—)

There wasn't any other way than to take as much detour as possible to lure the enemy and bought time. But the prospect that the current Alma and everyone here would be able to do that was thin.

"N, no..... That's, they are decreasing! It's unbelievable. Just, what on earth.....!"

"What!? Speak clearly!? There ain't any time!?"

Alma was impatient by his subordinate's flustered voice and questioned her.

But, Aeril who he carried in his arms opened her mouth in the place of the

squad member.

"Perhaps you will understand, if you look at her radar....."

"—!?"

Alma who was scared of the approaching threat saw the radar of his subordinate's Drake and turned speechless.

The number was decreasing.

The signal that displayed the Abysses' reaction should be covering up the screen to the brim, but the dots that represented the Abysses were decreasing in number with raging speed.

"What, the. What the hell is going on—!?"

"Let's get out of this room and return to the passage. You will get it then. Surely....."

"....."

Urged by Aeryl's voice, Alma returned to the central passage.

There a sight that made him doubted his eyes entered his view.

The swarm of flying type Abyss that flew inside one after another from the entrance of the central passage.

The instant they entered the attack range of Lux's Bahamut, they were instantly carved apart into pieces of meat.

In defiance of the overwhelming amount of enemy, their number was decreasing in accelerating speed instead.

"Wha, what..... This is—!?"

"Quick Shot....., the Black Hero's personal battle technique that he specialized in."

"Eh.....?"

The compression strengthening of time by Bahamut.

He applied that on himself to lure the enemy and then overwhelmed them with slashes that were sped up by several times over.

When the enemy fiercely approached to take advantage of the opening when reusing the technique, he would dodge using masterful defense and foresight before meeting them once more with super fast consecutive slashes.

That was all there was to it, but Alma understood the extreme difficulty of carrying it out.

No, more importantly, he was dumbfounded hearing the words that Aeril muttered just now.

"What you saw.....isn't mistaken. He.....Lux-kun took up the sword for the sake of the people that were hurt and stood up, he is the real—"

Real—.

Thinking back now, perhaps the legend of Black Hero itself might be the vestiges of world revision's construction that Fugil executed.

Facing a thousand and two hundred Drag-Knights of the old empire and destroying them in one night.

Such [lie] that was like a large-scale folklore, it became valid by making each people supplemented the inconsistencies that was born from Endless' world revision by themselves.

But, Lux's determination, his battle at that time wasn't an illusion.

Now he displayed that strength once more as though to prove that.

When the number of the Abysses was reduced until less than half, Lux charged into the center of the enemy's swarm.

"USHAAAAAH—!"

The demonic swarm attacked from every direction and angle. He intercepted them with the shortest movement and fastest speed.

He moved in the air as though dancing. Each time a sword flash gleamed, an enemy would vanish.

"Amazing....."

It was just a several minutes, but Alma watched in fascination forgetting the time.

Superhuman feat that was originally beyond human was repeated before his eyes.

"Such, thing..... Is really—"

Alma whose family of famous noble was attacked and barely escaped alive from the horse cart of the slave trader who picked him up, later he heard about that legend.

The illusive Drag-Knight who with just a single Drag-Ride, destroyed the old empire in a single night.

The legendary Drag-Knight who saved Alma's heart.

"That is—the Black Hero."

This was his first time directly seeing him, but regardless of that he was able to believe that his imagination was the truth.

"Alma."

"Ye, yes-!?"

Alma returned to his senses when Lux who returned to the central passage called out to him.

When he noticed the gathered Abysses were wholly annihilated. They became countless meat lumps that crumbled down into ashes.

"Is the squad safe? Then I want you to take Aeril and recover the Grand Force. When you are finished with that we will withdraw. If I'm not mistaken the Garden's transfer device should activate soon."

"Eh, ah..... Roger!"

He quickly looked at his watch and noticed that certainly the transfer to outside would start at seven more minutes.

Alma was shocked that even though the young man in front of him was going through such fierce battle, not only his breathing wasn't thrown out of order at all, he even calculated the remaining time.

But, this wasn't the time for admiration.

The current Alma was an inexperienced person of fourteen years old, but he

was the captain of a squad.

[Everybody, we are pulling back! Don't forget the wounded! Go ahead!]

He sent that instruction with Dragon Voice.

Almost all of the many Abysses that were called here were exterminated by Lux.

They had recovered as many treasures as they could take. Now only the recovery of Grand Force was left.

Because it would be impossible to recover it without Aeryl who descended from the Lord's bloodline, it was necessary to bring her, but surely there wouldn't be any problem.

More importantly, there was something that Alma himself wanted to ask.

"A, are you the Black Hero? Did you really, destroy that old empire—"

".....No, it's still half."

When Alma who was still wearing Drake walked toward Lux and questioned him, Lux quietly answered so.

"Half?"

"Be careful, it's still not over."

".....!?"

Instantly, Lux's Bahamut jumped to in front of Alma and turned around, unleashing a slash at the same time.

—*GIINN!*

Quick Draw.

The secret technique that Alma learned with desperate resolution was unleashed by Lux with precise motion that far surpassed his.

".....Wha-!?"

Looking there, Fugil who should be buried under rubbles before this was closing in and created a situation where both Chaos Brand locked with each other.

In order to defend against Lux's interception, Fugil intentionally accelerated from long distance and flew in, striking with an attack that had the Drag-Ride's mass placed behind it.

And then in order to deal with that absurd destructive power, Lux crushed the attack's starting point with a flash of Quick Draw.

The crossing Blades were pushed at each other strongly and made grinding sound.

Lux's expression didn't change at all even in such risky situation and he spoke.

"Alma. I'll keep you safe so please recover the Grand Force. This man's target is Aeryl."

".....Interesting. There are things that can only be seen through a long life. To think that someone who can fight against me even if only to some extent will appear—"

Fugil's lips distorted into a grin while he kept pressing down with his great sword. His joy was boiling up.

"Then I will fight with a worthy strength—Over Limit – On!"

Fugil leaped backward, at the same time he put his hand on his Sword Device and pulled it out while focusing in his mind.

Right after that, light particles converged around him and formed a cluster of new machines.

"—!? I won't let you!"

Seeing that Lux reflexively yelled and charged in order to stop Fugil from summoning additional armor to transform into Over Limit.

But, the next moment the light converging at the surrounding increased further in intensity and Lux's—no, everyone's sight was blinded.

"Don't tell me, this is—!?"

The Reload on Fire that Fugil's Bahamut activated performed compression strengthening on the surrounding light and magnified the radiance until more than ten times.

Fugil intentionally summoned additional armor in front of Lux and exposed an opening to invite Lux's attack.

And then Reload on Fire that was activated beforehand strengthened the light and blinded the enemy's eyes.

"So that got you, you fool."

Right after that, the slash of Chaos Brand that Fugil dealt aimed at Lux's armored shoulder.

The instant the dazzling light that painted their whole sight vanished, Alma and Aeril saw a shocking sight.

The slash that Fugil unleashed cut apart the barrier of Lux's Bahamut and hit slightly away from the vital Force Core.

But, at the same time the great sword of Lux who was keeping his eyes closed also pierced into Fugil's armor in a counterattack.

Was it instinct, or foresight?

Or perhaps just a coincidence?

In any case it was a situation where they almost struck each other down. Both Drag-Rides were blown backward.

"Guh.....!?"

"A desperate attack huh.....? Either way, it's the end already."

While Lux was recovering his posture, Fugil finished the Over Limit's transformation.

When he finished preparing, he flew toward Lux with explosive speed.

Over Limit was the strongest mode that activated the possible use of mobility—power output that surpassed the limit and put too much burden on the human body.

However, for Fugil who surpassed the reaction speed of human, he was able to ignore the damage from the backlash.

Lux also desperately fought back, but every single one of his reaction fell behind by a breath.

Lux's defense crumbled just by that and his armor was smashed and torn.

On the other hand Lux had no free time to use Over Limit himself.

If he didn't stop Fugil's movement for a while at the very least, the chance for that wouldn't come.

With him unable to predict the enemy's movement, there was also no way he could execute Quick Shot.

The only way remaining was to aim in performing Violent Strike, which was performing strengthening compression on the enemy's time, stopping his movement and attacked during that time, but—.

"What's wrong? Where does your momentum from before vanished into?"

"Ku, a.....!"

The moment Lux turned into defense, Fugil pressed his attack even further.

He was paying meticulous attention while launching varied attacks from every direction.

Ragnarok boated overwhelming firepower and endurance, but in return they had low tactical mind. In contrast this enemy fully used his intellect and also ability to corner Lux.

Alma who was watching from some distance away averted his eyes from that unfavorable situation and unconsciously raised his voice.

"Shit! Just what the hell we should do!? There ain't any way this kind of enemy can be beaten! If we don't escape right away—"

".....Let's, recover the Grand Force quickly, in the deepest, room..... With my authority, it can be opened, so....."

Alma followed Aeryl's instruction and headed toward the deepest room.

Fugil who reacted to that took off his eyes from Lux for an instant. Lux activated Bahamut's Divine Raiment at that time.

"—Reload on Fire."

Dazzling light surged and the surrounding range other than himself was put under the effect of powerful compression strengthening of time.

Lux immediately moved Bahamut and slashed, but Fugil flew backward by an instant faster and escaped from Reload on Fire' range.

".....Wha-!?"

The activation of Divine Raiment would put a certain range of territory under its influence in less than a second.

And yet, Fugil leaped backward and escaped with super reaction speed. Lux was doubting his eyes seeing that.

If it was said that it was a feat that was possible due to the opponent's Bahamut in Over Limit mode then certainly that was true, but that wasn't all.

Lux instantly comprehended that it was a reaction that came because the opponent had seen through the preliminary movement of Lux's attack.

Instantly, the horizontal mowing slash that Fugil launched struck his torso and sent him flying.

"U, guah.....!"

An impact that felt like it was like screwing through his body ran inside. Sparks flickered in his brain.

The thick armor of the Divine Drag-Ride was broken and Lux vomited blood.

He crashed on the treasure warehouse floor's metallic wall and his back wings broke down.

He barely avoided having his armor dispelled, but his movement was sealed due to the damage to his flesh body.

"So you are only at this level my wise younger brother. As I thought you—don't have the caliber of a king."

A grin formed on Fugil's lips.

The direction of the battle was already clear, even so Lux moved his trembling body and stood up.

.

Part 8

"Why..... Why is he fighting until that far.....!?"

A ferocious battle was going on at the rear.

Alma listened to that sound inside the deepest room.

Lux was forced into a one-sided defensive battle against Fugil's continuous attack with the Over Limit's overwhelming difference in spec.

Lux was desperately swinging his great sword, but even that only weapon of his was broken in the middle.

"Just why!?I'm scared. I've never heard about this kind of opponent."

".....You, what are you.....coming here, for?"

Aeril somehow stood up. She reached out her hand to the object inside the control room while still naked.

She cancelled the system with the mind control operation using the Lord's authority. Then she started the preparation to take out the installed Grand Force.

Her tone wasn't criticizing at all.

Aeril who possessed an androgynous beauty smiled kindly.

"The lot who abandoned me, those guy who made me went through this kind of life, I wanted to get even with them but, I don't care about that anymore..... Isn't it fine, even if I run away.....! That I don't wanna fight—"

".....But, you.....don't want to run away, so you fought.....isn't that, right?"

Listening to Aeril's word, Alma was taken aback and held his breath.

Until he met with that mysterious girl....., he continued to run away all the time.

Each time he was pursued and captured, before finally he was picked by Kilzrake family and obtained a place of repose.

For the sake of his benefactor, the boss—Magialca.

And then, for the sake of taking back his stolen pride, he volunteered himself for this battle.

"We.....Lux-kun, had many things taken away from us until now. And then, he also couldn't overlook someone who has their precious thing taken away from them. That's why, surely....."

.

Part 9

".....Haa, haa!"

Lux was gasping for breath with his shoulders heaving up and down.

In this situation where he couldn't use Over Limit, he had already attempted every kind of tactic.

"Foolish man. Why are you resisting to that extent? Your weapon is broken, and you also have no strength left. You should have obtained peace with the destruction of the old empire, and yet why are you intentionally challenging me?"

Fugil suddenly showed an exasperated smile and shrugged his shoulders.

Reaction speed, situational judgment, movement prediction, strength, speed, and technique.

Because Fugil was a cut above Lux in everything, the difference was gradually widening.

Even in regard to the toughness of their flesh body, Fugil was overwhelmingly superior in the first place.

Even if Lux managed to use Over Limit, he would be unable to surpass the enemy's Bahamut.

But, Lux's determination didn't break.

He was desperately hanging on while taking a fighting stance with the snapped Chaos Brand held right in front of him.

".....I, have to know."

What he had been chasing and looking for all this time since that day of revolution.

No, he was holding this question since far before that.

"Fugil. The mission of hero that you mentioned, the secret hidden within Sacred Eclipse....."

"The Sacred Eclipse's secret? There is no need for you to know. The likes of you who are defeated in this place, cannot do anything like searching for Avalon!"

What was resurrected, was the dialogue in that day of revolution.

The words and memory that were exchanged when fighting with the blazing castle as the background.

Right now in this place, Lux was going to ask about the talk of that day that he lost.

"Your objective should have been accomplished. Why are you risking your life to challenge me?"

"I have to know no matter what! The truth that I have averted my eyes from until now, I have to know everything, and think over it myself!"

GO-!, Fugil's Bahamut glided and instantly approached Lux.

Lux closed the distance with a low stance in respond and slipped into the opponent's chest.

"-.....!?"

Seeing that Fugil's expression showed a slight wariness but, he was too slow.

"HAAAAAAAAAH!"

When he immediately tried to take distance, Fugil suppressed the output of his flight.

Not letting go of that opening, without fear Lux stepped even closer into the range.

In the defense and offense of super close quarter, Lux cut apart the barrier of Fugil's Bahamut and his blade struck toward his shoulder armor.

"—What?"

The special armament great sword that was snapped in half, and the brand new Chaos Brand that had no scratch at all.

Thinking normally there was the difference in reach between the two, and it wasn't even worth any argument if it was asked which sword had the

advantage.

But, in super close quarter combat—if one side slipped into the opponent's chest then the story would be different.

Even if both sides didn't have the space to swing their sword in their state that was sticking to each other, short sword would work advantageously.

Lux surpassed Fugil in that one point.

"What are you planning.....? Do you believe that you can win against me just by obtaining a little advantage by controlling the distance?"

'Fuh', Fugil who was clad in Bahamut scoffed.

In contrast no smile or anything slipped out from Lux, he heightened his concentration even more and stepped in.

Right after that, the shockwave of Howling Howl was unleashed from the head part of the Bahamut worn by Fugil.

"_____"

But a moment before that happened, Lux flew forward and tackled. By making the enemy's head part lifted up, he evaded the fired out energy torrent.

When Fugil's balance crumbled by the collision, the broken Chaos Brand struck.

With the blade landing and the enemy's concentration was lacking while receiving damage, the Divine Raiment couldn't be activated.

Lux used that point skillfully and launched a consecutive attack that didn't give the enemy time to breath.

"—End Action!"

".....-!?"

Instantly, Lux's eyes were tinged with red light, and infinite slashes attacked Fugil.

.

Part 10

"What the hell is that, that person—"

Fugil who should be getting ahead step by step until now was brought down into an equal offense and defense before anyone noticed, and finally Lux surpassed him.

Originally after a single action, there would be an opening created in the Drag-Ride's operation without fail. But now the Drag-Ride was operating without any pause endlessly.

Alma was dumbfounded seeing that strange sight from the room's entrance.

"How can, against that monstrous opponent, that kind of....."

On the other side, Aeryl smiled and muttered even while concentrating on the operation of taking out the Grand Force.

"That is, because he is the Black Hero. Because he is the existence that you believed in, the real hero. Also—surely that movement is because he finally overcome the effect of Baptism."

"Overcoming, the Baptism.....?"

Aeryl nodded at Alma's question.

Why did Lux become far stronger than before?

Before that, why was it in these few week his body was weak and feverish—.

That was the effect of the Baptism that he received more than two weeks ago.

Human was equipped with the function that when their body was tormented, in respond to that the body would evolve by means of regeneration.

Broken bone and injured muscle would grow thicker and stronger at the same time with the recovery.

It was strengthened even more by Baptism through administering Elixir, heightening the body function and the five senses.

During the several days of parade, Lux wasn't accustomed to Drag-Ride control and his body got into a bad shape was because his senses couldn't catch up to the drastic change of his body, making him unable to handle his own body.

If the physical ability was strengthened, effective control of Drag-Ride could be realized just as much.

Smoother and more powerful piloting than before.

The attack became infinite combo that pierced through Fugil and Bahamut.

"The armor, is breaking..... That Divine Drag-Ride that looked like demon, is getting destroyed—"

The infinite slashes of End Action were gradually surpassing Fugil's endurance.

Lux unleashed his attack from every direction so that the enemy wouldn't narrow in to him while gradually accumulating slashes inexhaustibly to one spot, focusing the attack.

The might jumped up drastically due to the focused consecutive attack to one point, arriving to the utmost limit.

The legendary secret technique of the old empire Alma had been hearing about.

This time Lux was improving and evolving it.

"Why? My Bahamut's output is.....weakening!?"

"—Fugil. What you know right now I the me and my technique, from five years ago!"

Finally the reinforced barrier and Fugil's defensive stance were broken.

The point where the impact of the slashes was accumulated into was the shoulder where the Force Core was located. Noticing that, Fugil's hand moved toward the handle of his Sword Device.

"That guy, what is he planning!?"

Alma who noticed that immediately yelled.

Fugil tightly grabbed the Drag-Ride's other control stick that was his Sword

Device in order to forcefully move his own Bahamut that was already unable to receive the order from body control operation.

"—Fu. You are different from the past you say? Don't spout nonsense you aristocrat who can't even kill those who should be killed!"

The next instant, the armor of Bahamut that Fugil was wearing was wrapped by fierce crimson light.

".....!?"

By means of mind control operation using the Sword Device, the remaining energy that was gathered until now was liberated, activating the Divine Raiment forcefully.

By performing compression strengthening to the time at his own surrounding, the time of wide range area including Lux was decelerated as though time had stopped.

Due to the compression strengthening of time that Fugil unleashed, the five seconds of the first half was greatly decelerated.

In other words, it created a gap in the consecutive attacks of End Action that didn't have even a moment of pause, allowing Fugil to escape backward and rallied himself.

At that point, there were three seconds remaining until the time deceleration of Fugil's Reload on Fire ended.

Creak-, crack crack crack-!

The armor and frame of Fugil's Bahamut were broken by the accumulating damage and it was squashed along with such sound.

Even so he barely distributed the energy of interception to the back wings and switched to flying toward Lux. It took two second for all that.

With the remaining one second he gathered his maximum strength and unleashed the sure kill attack toward Lux who was decelerated into a state of freezing.

Alma and Aeryl who were similarly inside the range of the compression strengthening witnessed that moment from the distance of a few dozen ml

away.

"In the end there is nothing that you can do. You can just throw away your caliber as king and live in a peaceful world where the old empire is destroyed, farewell!"

Fugil laughed and swung down Chaos Brand that had its blade enveloped in energy.

"No....., it's hopeless-!?"

The instant Alma yelled in despair inside his heart. The movement of the Bahamut worn by Fugil stopped still.

It wasn't Fugil intending to hold back or letting Lux got away, as could be seen from his shocked expression.

"No. There is something that I can do. At the very least, compared to the me at that time—"

These five year since that day of revolution.

All that time he had been chasing after the movement of Fugil who was wearing Bahamut.

He was polishing himself in order to chase after him, as the benchmark of the ideal that he was aiming at.

"Ho, w..... The Drag-Ride's, movement—!?"

"Focusing energy into a single point is indispensable to use Divine Raiment. —The damages accumulated from End Action attacked at your Bahamut all at once the moment you loosen the energy to the barrier and turned it for attack."

Lux told that to Fugil while time was stretched longer by the compression strengthening.

The infinite consecutive attacks penetrated the three defenses of the weapon, barrier, and armor, converged into one point and punched into the vitals.

A certain amount of damage was accumulated into the Force Core and caused system down.

Once the consecutive attacks began, the fate that was waiting at the end was guidance to an inescapable demise.

Reinforcement of the body that realized flexible control of Drag-Ride.

Through that, attacks were piled up with even more precision, accumulating damage that put the final stake into the coffin by making it impossible to counterattack. That was the true worth of the superhuman feat.

"End Action. This is the new completed version of one of my hidden techniques."

".....-!?"

Right after Lux declared that, the five seconds period of the second half of Fugil's Reload on Fire started, and Lux's time was accelerated by more than ten times.

"—Reload on Fire."

After making use of the opponent's Reload on Fire and entered a state of maximum acceleration, Lux also activated the Divine Raiment of his own Bahamut.

The target of the compression strengthening was the speed of time flowing within the radius of several ml other than himself.

Lux's time was accelerated due to the latter five seconds of Fugil's Reload on Fire, while Fugil was conversely decelerated due to receiving the first five seconds period of Lux's Reload on Fire.

Lux came out on top using the tactic that made use of the fact that both sides were using Bahamut. He created a five seconds period where there was overwhelming difference of speed between both sides which was impossible to achieve alone.

"Lux....., you—!"

Right after that, a consecutive attack of overwhelming destructive power struck Fugil who couldn't make any movement.

The jet black great dragon boasted matchless endurance.

That armor was smashed fragily like candy. Fresh blood spurted out.

Fugil whose armor was dispelled fell on the metallic floor. His knees slumped down weakly.

"Ku, kuku....., *looks like, you've*, grown a bit. *Wise*, younger brother."

Fugil vomited out a lump of blood, at the same time a shining heart with strange shape came into sight from his chest.

Alma noticed that it was the core of Abyss and he held his breath.

"—What the hell is this guy, he isn't a human!?"

"It's Sacred Eclipse. This is a fake Fugil created by projecting the servant's will. Though as expected the Divine Drag-Ride itself is the real thing. Most likely it was granted with the Bahamut that was created by Ouroboros's special armament Infinity. It's to be used when someone who considered Fugil as formidable enemy appear here—"

Lux also noticed that this Fugil was a fake.

He was able to anticipate that from how at first the tentacles of Abyss appeared from the room where Aeryl was confined.

But, even without that he was vaguely noticing this fact through a sixth sense that was hard to be expressed in words.

What Lux was fighting just now was the formidable enemy existing inside Lux's memory, the duplicate of Fugil who he fought in that day of revolution five years ago.

It was Fugil's strength when he faced Lux without the support of Ouroboros—furthermore he wasn't fighting at his full strength.

Because the core of Ragnarok was already destroyed, the body couldn't transform anymore and crumbled. The figure was gradually changing into ashes.

"That means, you defeated the Sacred Eclipse!? The thing that is possessing that queen of the new kingdom—"

"No, perhaps that's not it."

Lux turned around and replied to Alma's muttering.

"I think this Sacred Eclipse is nothing more than a clone created by the main body. It's placed here so it must have considerable power shared into it, but its strength should be only around a fragment of the original."

"I also, agree....., it also didn't use the ability of the other seven Ragnarok, isn't it....."

Aeril also agreed with a sigh that sounded slightly disappointed.

He heard that the greatest and strongest Sacred Eclipse that had become complete possessed strength that was beyond them.

Exactly because of that Magialca instructed to take the Grand Force from the Ruin.

If they made the ability of Avalon to become incomplete, Ouroboros would inevitably become incomplete too.

From the aspect of battle strength it would only get weakened by several tens of percent, but now it should become unable to use world revision at full power.

"You intentionally, *tried to*, fight the me at that time, *huh*..... *But*, what meaning there is, *in winning against the me*, from five years ago.....?"

"-.....!?"

Alma heard the words of the crumbling clone of Sacred Eclipse and shuddered.

This was the Sacred Eclipse that projected Fugil of five years ago that Lux's memory recognized as the strongest.

Even like this its strength was far away from the real Fugil's full strength.

But, Lux wasn't even agitated by such words and asserted.

"I obtained something from this. If you are a clone of Sacred Eclipse, you can drag out the memory that I've already forgotten and make me remember the conversation five years ago. I can gather clue to defeat you, learn the way you fight, and form countermeasure. After all the you at that time intended to make

me forget everything using the revision."

"....."

Those words that Lux told casually made everyone there including Fugil speechless.

A part of his memory with Fugil that he was made to forget completely.

By making Sacred Eclipse projected the memory of five years ago that was hidden at the depth of Lux's mind, Lux himself drew out the memory and even confirmed it. That fact left everyone there dumbfounded.

He made others thought that he fell into the opponent's scheme, but instead he used even the nature that Sacred Eclipse possessed and fought it.

Everything was in order to surpass the strength of Fugil that he fought five years ago, questioned his true intention, and connected the parts.

"I fight in order to know everything—to find the right path with the full knowledge of everything. I won't let the new kingdom be destroyed. I will expose Sacred Eclipse's mystery and stop it. I'll save Lisha-sama and Queen Raffi too without destroying the new kingdom!"

"For *that*, you will pretend to be evil? Even if you will become the new kingdom's enemy, and lose everything, you've build *until now*—"

"Yeah..... That is the mission as an imperial family that I believe in. The path I'm aiming for, that differ with your path of ruling."

Lux gave his answer to the clone of Sacred Eclipse that was tracing the past Fugil.

"Very well..... I'll be, *waiting*..... Wise younger brother....."

After muttering its last, the Sacred Eclipse crumbled completely into ash and vanished.

With this, the first barrier was broken through.

Ouroboros couldn't perform world revision anymore. It also became impossible to easily kill the consuls of the old empire faction and the important people of other country.

But, of course if it became known that the Sacred Eclipse protecting this place was killed and Aeril was rescued, Raffi and Fugil would hurriedly act.

For now they had to hide Aeril in a safe place and cleaned out the poison used for brain washing from her.

She wouldn't be able to use Drag-Knight for a while, but either way she would become helpful addition.

"For now.....it's over. Lux-kun. Switch to Wyvern and let's get out of here. If we got found out by the people in the checking station, we will become wanted man, so be careful."

They had already took Grand Force and as many weapons and Drag-Rides they could carry from the treasure warehouse.

With this their fragile battle strength that could be blown away with a breath would become somewhat better.

".....Right, let's go Aeril. Alma too, sorry to make you go along with this."

When Lux muttered that with a somewhat sad expression, Alma shook his head in panic.

"No, no such thing! To think, that you are the Black Hero—, please forgive all my rudeness before this!"

".....Did something happen?"

"No well, that's, a little bit."

Lux hesitated to answer Aeril who tilted her head at Alma's exaggerated reaction.

Alma who didn't know that Lux was the Black Hero was making light of him before. Aeril burst into laughter hearing that.

"You don't need.....to worry too much about it. After all it's half the truth that Lux-kun is slovenly..... Especially concerning his relationship with female."

"Aeril, I beg you don't move too much. Your body is still not well."

Aeril seemed to have recovered somewhat from the drug. She was making fun of him in a gesture that was really like her.

He was happy that she recovered her liveliness, but he felt a bit complicated.

Alma too was also nodding with a bewildered expression while they hurried to link up with the squad that went ahead of them.

They retreated while carrying the souvenir of the Grand Force, several rare weapons, and more than ten Drag-Rides.

.

Part 11

".....-!? No way, such thing is—"

At the same time, Raffi who operated the revision device of Avalon noticed a certain matter and lost her words.

The wave of energy that operated the perception revision vanished in the middle.

She intended to falsify the memory of the people gathering in the new kingdom until the last day of the parade, and imprinted that the old empire faction and Prime Minister Nulph had died in accident several weeks ago.

She also intended to completely rewrite the memory of the people so that they could accept about the change in Raffi's change of appearance and how Fugil was standing as her aide, but—.

She searched for any abnormality in the Ruins through Arshalia, and two hours later.

The Automata of Garden, Clan Lieze arrived at Avalon riding her Divine Drag-Ride.

The repaired Gear Leader reported to her that the clone of Sacred Eclipse that Raffi created as guard just in case was destroyed.

Because Clan Lieze was destroyed before she learned the true identity of the intruder, she only remembered what happened there fragmentarily.

She only recalled that bandits attacked the Ruin, and in the end Aerial along with several treasures were stolen.

This was an alarming situation for Raffi. If even a single Grand Force was extracted, the power of Avalon would be halved.

Through Sacred Eclipse he was able to understand that the place was at the Garden that was located inside new kingdom's territory.

"—So my clone was defeated. Even though it should conceal a strength that is equal to Ragnarok."

"....."

Fugil who was standing at her side didn't say anything.

He was merely watching over her silently, judging her.

".....If the Grand Force is taken, the only one who can do it is only the Lords, or existence that correspond to them. So someone liberate Aeril Vi Arcadia who was in the middle of brainwashing and took her away."

"....."

Raffi fell silent for a while in a daze.

But, her lips suddenly relaxed and she smiled innocently like a little girl.

"—I see, it's really interesting."

"Hou."

Fugil too was taken aback by Raffi's words. He let out a small sigh of admiration.

Avalon that had reached around 90% in allowing her a complete rule became impossible to use with this.

Even the world revision that she planned to do for the last time couldn't be done completely with the lack of Grand Force.

Because people who saw through the world revision appeared, and they planned to destroy her bastion.

But, even knowing that Raffi's lips relaxed cheerfully.

"This mean that my first enemy after I obtained power has appeared. It's really fun. After this I can face my enemy with my own will as a queen."

Raffi resolved herself to carry out evil deed as a ruler in order to bring the new kingdom closer toward her ideal.

Perhaps inside her, she believed that act as something legitimate.

In short, she discovered happiness in the chance where her determination was tested.

"Although, I cannot just feel happy. For now I should start from grasping the

situation. Let's send several Automata to the Garden in order to confirm the situation. There isn't any objection right?"

"As your majesty wish."

"Understood.....deyagarimasu."

The two Automata with their respective peculiar mechanical ears and similar face equipped their Drag-Ride and flew away.

Raffi planned to have them worked in the open as her royal guard, at the present where the last world revision ended in incomplete state, she would need to have them worked behind the scene again.

The Divine Raiment of Ouroboros—Endless.

The perception revision using Avalon and seven Ruins resonating together, even if it was activated it would be dispelled if it wasn't used in the complete state.

The last push. The corpse of the consuls from old empire faction who were dealt with at this loop would be noticed by the people at this rate.

Even so—she could only plant the perception of [nothing happened] in order to deceive the people for the moment.

It was also similar in regard to Fugil, because he had characteristic appearance that showed his relation with the imperial family of the old empire, sooner or later someone who suspected his true identity would appear.

Above all else, there was also Raffi's own change.

After all even her outer appearance already changed greatly.

"So there is around ten days until the curse of world revision is dispelled and the people notice the truth? It will be fine if we just take back Grand Force before that and settle this, isn't that right, Fugil?"

"For people with no experience of being injected with Elixir, they shouldn't notice the world revision until two weeks. Also there is difference between each people, but those who gradually notice that something is out of place surely will also appear.

Raffi pondered for a while at what Fugil pointed out.

After that—several hours later.

The Automata Yos Tork who went to look at the situation in Garden returned.

"As expected, any trace that can be used to expose the true identity of the intruders doesn't remain deyagarimasu. But, there is eyewitness report from the Drag-Knights in the checking station and a letter addressed to her majesty the queen was delivered deyagarimasu."

"....."

Raffi took the letter along with a little confusion.

There, the letter was written with a content that could also be considered as a kind of threat.

"What should be done, your majesty?"

"Let's see. First please spread this letter to my vassals. We should prepare countermeasure."

Half a day after she instructed that to Fugil, a certain rumor was spreading.

The fact that Prime Minister Nulph was secretly assassinated, and that a new threat toward the world alliance had appeared.

That a family member of the great man Count Atismata would expose the deception of the new kingdom with the secret they had.

The vassals inside the castle were told that a group of chivalrous thieves consisting of Drag-Knights introducing themselves as [Azure Division] had appeared.

Epilogue – Encounter And Reunion

Part 1

And then at the evening of the last day of the parade.

In front of the castle of the royal capital Lordgalia.

In front of the terrace inside the palace ground—that was justting out from the castle, a great number of people were gathering.

Along with the heat produced by the countless bonfires, the people's expectation was whirling before the award ceremony for military exploits that would be held after this.

First Queen Raffi looked around at the people, then she raised her voice and made a fervent speech.

Her appearance was different from before. She looked like a girl, but there still wasn't anyone among the people who was holding doubt about that change.

"Then as planned, I wish to start the award ceremony for those who has rendered distinguished military achievement at this occasion. The new kingdom has been levied with many trials from last year until this year. Abyss's attack, the threat of the rebel army, the emergence of the Lords, furthermore the battle for Avalon caused many Drag-Knights to be lost, and it also caused hardships for all of you people of the kingdom."

Raffi closed her eyes keenly in recollection, then she continued her speech after some pause.

Originally the speech was the role of Prime Minister Nulph, but thi time—he who had left the stage wasn't here.

Queen Raffi served as his replacement.

"However, we are victorious. The invaders from the old era the Lords are defeated, Avalon that is the nucleus of the Ruins is secured, their weapon the

Sacred Eclipse is sealed. After this we will negotiate with other countries and ascertain the spirit of cooperation while putting the power of Ruin for the use of peace and prosperity."

—OOOOOOOOH!

Noisy cheers were produced like a wave before drawing back.

"Those who participated in that last decisive battle, the people who rendered the greatest contribution, are the raid squad of the Academy that will shoulder the future of our new kingdom. The Syvalles will be awarded in this place, with praises for their courage and strength."

Following Queen Raffi's voice, the members of Syvalles including Lux lined up on the terrace of the castle.

Lisha, Krulcifer, Philuffy, Celis, Airi, the Triad.

Everyone was in their uniform to emphasize their status as Academy's students.

"—And then, I also has a news to tell all of you citizens."

Raffi's voice could be heard amidst the praising cheers were boiling up from the people. Lisha smiled hearing that.

Lux nodded slightly and took a step forward beside Lisha.

Queen Raffi waited for when the wave of cheers was calming down before she also stepped forward.

She lightly cleared her throat, then she showed her graceful smile to all the people.

"—At this occasion, I received help from so many people. The lords of the four great nobles with their order of Drag-Knights, Prime Minister Nulph and the consuls, the representatives of other countries, all of the people of this country, surely this victory couldn't possibly be obtained without the assistance of everyone."

Raffi lifted her face and showed a smiling face that had a trace of childishness remaining in it while speaking to the people.

"And then above all else, the determination of these two illuminated my path. Both of them are inexperienced people just like me. These two who should be immature didn't lose heart from the heaviness of responsibility, and cut open the future for everyone. Their figure and achievement that isn't held back by the past and continue to advance forward with all their strength even now is an act that all the people of this country including me ought to learn from. That is what I believe."

The gathered people lost their words from Queen Raffi's speech.

They imagined the content of the continuation from this point and watched attentively with held breath as though in anticipation.

"I will fulfill my responsibility as queen from here on too, at the same time I wish grant amnesty and reward for them. The criminal collar of Lux Arcadia and Airi Arcadia who are imperial family of the old empire, I wish to take it off at this place."

"—....."

The castle's terrace was enveloped in even deeper silence than before.

But, when applauses came from somewhere among the populace, it naturally spread to the whole and acclamation roared as though to split the sky.

"—Looks like the answer has come out. Congratulations, Lux-kun."

Krulcifer who came to his side placed her hand on his shoulder and smiled.

"Congrats, Lu-chan."

"Congratulations. Lux."

Philuffy and Celis who saw that also slowly walked toward them.

While everyone was telling him their respective congratulating words, Queen Raffi whose appearance had become like a young girl came in front of Lux.

At that moment, it was only slightly but, Philuffy blinked and opened her eyes wide toward Raffi.

An out of place feeling toward Queen Raffi's appearance that was different from before.

Perhaps Philuffy also noticed that.

Was it because of the world revision half a day ago that was carried out incompletely?

At the very least Krulcifer seemed to have forgotten the words of love she exchanged with Lux but, as for Philuffy—he wondered about it.

"Then Lux, excuse me."

And then a strange thing occurred. Queen Raffi reached out both her hands to take off the criminal collar personally in this place.

Queen Raffi's smile was kind without any worry in it.

Lux sensed the pitch black killing intent hidden behind those eyes.

If Raffi was really fusing with Sacred Eclipse, it would be possible to use her bare hands to reap Lux's neck in the blink of eye.

The queen's finger nail slightly pricked Lux's skin.

".....-!?"

When Lux grimaced at the slight pain—.

"Lux....., thank you for everything until now."

.

Click. The black collar was instantly taken off.

.

—OOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOH!

.

Right after that, cheers that caused the ground to shake boiled up from the gathered populace.

The applause remained within the ears no matter how much time passed, and the ceremony was concluded along with Lisha's adorable smile.

Like that the award ceremony ended safely and the group broke up.

The last night of the parade was growing late as though the battle behind the

scenes didn't exist from the start.



Part 2

"Thank you for your hard work. Have you determined who is the culprit?"

Fugil and Automata Arshalia met Queen Raffi who returned inside the castle.

It was consideration for their master who fulfilled her role.....not, they immediately asked about a certain matter.

"For now he seems to be innocent. From his reaction it's like he didn't notice the change in my appearance and my killing intent at all."

Raffi tilted her head with a wondering face.

It was because Raffi's own speculation seemed to be wrong.

The existence who crushed the Sacred Eclipse placed in the Ruin, Garden and rescued Aeryl, while taking away the Grand Force at the same time.

Taking into consideration the necessary strength and ability to take action for that, as well as the requirement that the culprit had to be someone with experience of receiving Baptism, Raffi first suspected that the mastermind might be Lux.

Lux couldn't move properly due to the fatigue from the battle the other day and took rest.

And then, although he noticed the truth of the world revision once, it looked like he didn't do anything and returned to an ordinary day but—.

Did the previous—the last world revision swallow his consciousness? Even that wasn't certain.

"He is a capable human but, he has a side somewhere in him that cannot be measured with logic."

Thinking back there was such sign since the revolution five years ago.

Lux concealed talent as Drag-Knight that towered above the rest, but it was unthinkable that a young twelve years old boy would attempt to destroy the old empire with just that.

Even among the people that Raffi knew, Lux was an outlier.

And then, after the old empire was destroyed, he accepted the role to do people's chore in order to follow Fugil's track.

In tournament's match, he single-mindedly continued persist in defense and polished his skill.

While originally possessing an overwhelming strength, he repeatedly exerted himself in what looked like a fruitless endeavor from a glance while there wasn't even anyone who recognized him.

"However, from our exchange just now, it's not clear now whether he is the culprit."

Thus Raffi tried to lead Lux into revealing the truth in the award ceremony just now.

If Lux noticed about the inconsistencies from the world revision and realized that Raffi was fused with Sacred Eclipse—, he would harbor a fear of [I might get killed by this monster here] from Raffi's threatening aura just now and he should be unable to help himself from reacting.

To start with Lux should feel a discomfort from her figure that had turned young, and he also knew enough about the danger of human shaped Ragnarok.

That understanding and fear should inevitably make Lux's body to turn stiff—but, in reality he didn't react at all.

"No, he only reacted slightly in pain from my strange threatening aura. In other words—"

"Lux Arcadia really don't know anything. Was that how it looked like?"

"Yes....."

Raffi nodded at Fugil's words.

In reality, logically Raffi couldn't kill Lux.

For the new kingdom after this, Lux should become the cornerstone as the symbol of victory, it wouldn't be exaggeration to say that he was a necessary and indispensable existence.

If Lux died at that place—no, if Lux died within this few years, there wouldn't be even a single advantage that could be gained from it.

If for example Lux was the one who rescued Aeril and took out the Grand Force, he should be able to easily conjecture the circumstance by that much.

But, setting that aside, reacting to the threat that was thrust before their eyes could be said as the correct human nature.

If someone noticed that a knife laced with deadly poison was thrown toward them, it was only obvious to immediately try to dodge.

Such reflex couldn't easily be covered up with mere acting. It was human's instinct as living creature.

Human would avoid danger following their instinct.

Being unable to move due to frozen feet when in high place, and averting one's face when feeling pain from the teeth, they were because of defensive instinct in order to survive.

But, sometimes this defensive instinct would hasten one's time of death.

Unable to cross a hanging bridge on high place and losing one's path of escape, or perhaps neglecting cavity to avoid the intense pain of taking off the tooth.

If Lux didn't react to even the threat of Raffi by his own will, that would mean he possessed mental strength that far surpassed ordinary person.

Therefore the doubt toward Lux was cleared.

"Putting even the fear of death under the control of his own reasoning. If he is the mastermind of this rebellion, that would mean he is mentally surpassing the monster me even while being a mere human."

'Fufu', she chuckled.

The expression of Raffi herself who was making that analysis turned into smile when she noticed it.

It wasn't a broken smile that was invaded by inhuman thought, it was a humane expression.

"Now that Avalon is sealed, the Automata too cannot really move in the open. For the time being we have to form a plan to take back the Grand Force and Aeryl Vi Arcadia, and deal with them but—"

After saying that, Raffi stared at the letter that was sent to her before this from a certain pirate.

In the letter, it was written about their purport of snatching away Aeryl and the Garden's Grand Force, furthermore there was also a war declaration toward the new kingdom.

If the Grand Force in the new kingdom's territory was stolen and Aeryl who was sheltered in the Academy was also kidnapped, in the next world conference—no, even before waiting for that all the other countries would immediately question the new kingdom about this failure.

There was even the possibility of using the surviving Seven Dragon Paladins under the just cause of taking back the Grand Force and rescuing Aeryl, to make the new kingdom become indebted to the other countries for the assistance.

"In that case, I too have no other choice but to make use of them openly and unreservedly."

Raffi chuckled and wrote letters to other countries.

She wrote the fact that Aeryl was kidnapped, and requested assistance to face the danger to the world.

The murder of Prime Minister Nulph, the assassination of the old empire faction, and also the kidnapping of Aeryl—she dealt with those facts by blaming it all at the rebels.

In that case, first she had to request the assistance of the greatest fighting force inside the country, Syvalles of Cross Field.

"Perhaps we should also strengthen those girls while we are at it. It's a good chance, let's use the tools brought out from Avalon and perform Baptism on them. If it's those girls surely they would be able to endure it."

There was a large pot placed inside Raffi's bedroom.

Even among the legacies of the Ruins, it was a special item that the Lord could

control, an item for surgical operation called the [Coffin].

It was for the sake of performing Baptism—the body strengthening that was once applied to Yoruka and the Lords with surgical operation that made human body to adapt to Elixir.

.

Part 3

".....Coffin?"

"Right. It's impossible already for me but, I think that perhaps Lux-kun should do that."

In the hideout of Kilzrake family located in the capital's castle town.

In that place that looked like a noble's palatial mansion at the surface, Lux was taking rest together with Aeryl.

Lux, Aeryl, and Magialca were sitting in the spacious living room set up at the underground space.

A day had passed since Aeryl's rescue. It seemed that her body had also calmed down somewhat. Although sshe couldn't wear Drag-Ride, it seemed there was no problem with her health.

There was also this kind of hideout in Cross Field, so they would form their plan when they returned there.

Honestly Lux could only feel complete astonishment toward Magialca who was setting up villas and hideout everywhere, but this time it saved them.

From here on Magialca too would give her support to Lux, not as Seven Dragon Paladins, but as the boss of Kilzrake family.

They were determined to ascertain the truth of the evil aspect of Sacred Eclipse, invaded Avalon once more, and stopped it from working.

They took out the Grand Force from the Garden this time.

They also brought out all sorts of Drag-Ride and rare weapons. Other than those there was also recording media Card Chips.

It was unknown what kind of data was stored inside them, but they might become a key to search for Avalon's weakness.

Raffi who fused with Sacred Eclipse was also troublesome, but above all else it was Fugil who was the greatest problem.

As long as they didn't try to harm or capture Raffi, at the present time Fugil wouldn't interfere in a big way, but in the end, it would be a different story if Raffi herself headed their way.

In not so far away future, sooner or later it was a wall that they had to break through.

"Lux-kun is starting to make the power of Baptism into your own but, that's still not enough. Just like how I'm connected with the power of Ruin and obtained the power of simple manipulation perception, just like how that Kirihome Yoruka-san obtained the power of magic eye to read presence—I think Lux yourself should also obtain a power."

For that, they collected a Coffin using the Lord's authority, but in actuality it wasn't that simple.

Baptism that granted special ability by means of body strengthening was accompanied with really great burden. And they couldn't surpass Fugil by doing that.

According to Aeril, Fugil's Baptism applied strengthening to his whole body, including his heart.

To do that it made use of Fugil's own innate constitution that could also be called as abnormal. Death would be definitely waiting if Lux tried to copy that.

Therefore, Aeril judged that Lux should only focus on strengthening a part of his body with Baptism, just like Yoruka.

"I want you to give me the Baptism as soon as we return to Cross Field. I'll think about it while in the way back."

"Right....."

Aeril nodded looking just a bit conflicted.

Challenging Fugil once more and making the new kingdom into enemy in order to save Queen Raffi were things that Lux chose himself.

However, even so, she was surely feeling anxious seeing him throwing himself into a harsh battle with little chance of victory.

"Don't make that kind of face Aeril. Because I'm happy. That you are safe."

That I'm able to save you, I'm really—"

Lux smiled while expressing his happiness. Aeryl's cheeks blushed red seeing that.

"I see....."

After staring at Lux with an intoxicated expression, she quietly averted her gaze.

In any case, Lux himself would avoid Syvalles's activity for a while under the pretense of poor physical health. Behind the scene he would command Aeryl and Alma to fight as Kilzrake's head.

If possible he also wanted a lot more other comrades, but thinking of the aftermath of defeating Queen Raffi, there was no way he could talk to Lisha and others.

Because if Lux's rebellion became a known fact, they would get dragged into it.

At that time he might took Airi and flee to other country.

(Everyone..... Sorry.)

While they loved him and Lux himself also loved them, he might be unable to answer their feeling.

Even if hypothetically he managed to defeat Sacred Eclipse and Fugil, he might have to leave this country secretly without anyone knowing.

His heart felt painful when thinking about the time if it turned out like that.

"An unseen battle to save the new kingdom. Your qualities as king are going to be tested once more."(Magialca)

"It's nothing that exaggerated."

He was simply unable to overlook it quietly.

Of Raffi who was unable to fight against her own weakness and got possessed by Sacred Eclipse.

Of the people who were tricked by her.

And above all else, the matter of Lisha.

"Well, let's think about the difficult matter later. We have to watch the movement of the queen and the hero-dono too. And so, go take a shower before going back. You also need some rest and change of mood."

"Understood. Then, please let me borrow the bathroom."

Lux sighed in relieve and climbed the stair of the underground room just as Magialca told him, heading toward the lodging that was lend to him above.

"Let me say this beforehand though, do you still haven't noticed? About that kid Alma you see. Actually—that kid is descended from the present royal family of the new kingdom you know?"

"Eh.....?"

"Well, it's fine if you haven't noticed. It will become clear to you soon anyway."

Lux tilted his head toward Magialca's implicative words while heading toward the large public bath.

He heard that currently there was only Alma who was in the middle of bathing, but they were both males so there wouldn't be any problem. He entered inside.

Lux got out of the cramped changing room and opened the glass door.

There—.

"I'm coming in, Alma—.....-!?"

"KYAAAAAAAAAH.....!?"

The instant he said that and stepped inside, Lux stiffened like rock.

What appeared from among the white steam wasn't the body of a boy, but the skin color with smooth undulation.

To cut the long story short, it was a girl's body that was quite grown up.

"—Wait, EEEEEH!?"

The face undoubtedly belonged to Alma Kilzrake.

"Lux-kuuun, what are you doinggg?"

Aeril who was at the corner of the bathroom glared at Lux with reproachful eyes.

Naturally she was also naked. Her well fleshed naked body that was contrary to her androgynous image was radiant.

Lux was flustered by the unexpected situation while remembering something in surprise.

The woman called Magialca was a ruffian with mischief that didn't lose against Relie.

And then above all else, about the secret that Alma hid.

"E, ehh, that..... Err..... Black Hero, sama!? Auu.....!?"

The velvety semi long blond hair, that bright red expression, it made Lux felt a déjà vu.

At the same time, the pieces inside his head slotted into place.

Lisha's story that he heard in the parade this time came to the forefront of his mind.

.

[Recently I'm also seeing a dream..... The dream of before and after the revolution five years ago happened.]

[In the past, do you remember when I talked about my little sister? For some reason, that girl's figure comes to my mind right now.]

Almatea.

When Count Atismata was killed and even his family's residence and hideout were attacked, that girl was thought to be missing—.

[Surely that girl won't forgive me if she see me right now. I betrayed father to keep my own life, on top of that I ascended to the seat of the princess of the new kingdom, the likes of me is just—]

.

At the revolution five years ago, Queen Raffi at that time leaked out information to Waybra.

Because of that the hideout of Lisha's little sister Alma was attacked and she was captured.

She was sold to other country and moved from place to place, before she reached Marcafal Kingdom.

And then, what Alma said to him when investigating the Garden—.

[.....That's right. But that ain't what hurt me the most. There is my aunt too but, only Onee-chan—my big sister, even though I believed that there is no way she would side with the like of old empire, and yet.....]

(I see. She heard about Lisha-sama siding with the old empire from the attacking soldier!)

Her revenge.

Revenge against her aunt who leaked her location to the enemy, and her ^{Lisha} big sister who broke her promise and sided with the enemy.

She was trying to make her revenge into reality in the shape of the new kingdom's destruction after she finished the mission from Kilzrake family this time.

"—I, see. So that's how it is."

That girl idolized the Black Hero who destroyed the old empire and wanted to become Lux's subordinate.

It was too much of an adverse fate.

But, the instant he understood that, a scenario surfaced in Lux's mind.

"Alma, I want you to talk to me in detail. About your revenge, and the new kingdom—"

The instant Lux started talking with a serious face, Aeryl splashed him with hot

water.

"Do that later! Geez!"

"Sorry....."

Lux instantly recalled that this place was the bathroom.

.

Part 4

"Kilzrake family.....?"

Half a day later, a letter from new kingdom's messenger was sent to the inn where Airi and others were staying.

The content was instruction of a top secret mission addressed to Syvalles and Relie.

It said, the Grand Force of Garden was stolen by Malcafar Kingdom's mafia—Kilzrake family's Drag-Knight squad, Azure Division. The mission was to find the group and annihilate them.

And then there was written invitation to receive surgery of Baptism for partial strengthening.

A royal order was given out in order to rescue the kidnapped Aeryl Vi Arcadia.

Furthermore Lisha who was inside the same room lost her voice seeing the name of the person who was thought to be the mastermind.

Almatea Atismata.

The name of the person who would shake the new kingdom's existence once more was written there.

Thus, a new curtain was raised of the probing and all-out war between the new kingdom camp, versus the Azure Division.

Afterword

Long time no see. This is the author Akatsuki.

.

It's sudden but, collecting data is counted as expense in the author occupation, so it's an occupation where it seems it's relatively easy to travel.

But since I won the competition of GA Bunko-sama ten years ago and became author (or rather even before that too), I have never done any decent traveling.

.

One day, when I was talking with my fellow author, perhaps because I was tired of something suddenly I slipped out saying 「I want to travel」. And it was decided to go travelling to Okinawa following the momentum at that time.

The time was a bit early at the end of July, aiming at just barely before the rainy season began, but it was the correct choice thinking of the abnormal heat this year.

Even the sunlight of Naha in July was hellish. I thought I would die jut from walking fifteen minutes until the station.

However the main objective was snorkeling at the second day in Zamami Island.

Floating lazily on the sea and putting your face into the water while looking underwater at the fish or coral or turtle or shark was great (there was also shark).

At the first day we were visited by sudden heavy rain, so we immediately returned and shut ourselves in the hotel of Naha city, passing the time that wasn't any different with the usual, but Zamami Island where we were going using ferry at the second day was splendidly sunny. We were able to enjoy the scenery of the brilliant sea.

.

When staying in the scenery of southern country that was decorated with the

blue sea that is spreading endlessly, the perfectly clear sky, the dazzling sunlight and wind, it felt like I could forget the reality.

I wished to be allowed to talk a bit with snorkeling instructor at the occasion, but I was told that originally he was from Kyoto and stayed in the island that he liked.

So there is also that kind of way to live. It felt like I got a bit of glimpse to another world.

.

The trip to Okinawa was really fun, so I want to try going somewhere else again.

Well, my own house is the most relaxing as expected though.....

Well then, it will be great if we can meet again at volume 17.

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A certain day at 2018 August Akatsuki Senri